

# The fast-food culture

By Farah Qassem  
Star Staff Writer

LAST WEEK we had a story about the social side of food. This week, we are going to talk about a similar subject again, one that is very dear to our hearts. I am talking about eating, but not any kind of eating.

No, this type of food was introduced from outside. It was like an invasion, but this time, it had a very different kind of streak. It was the invasion of the fast-food: burgers, fried chickens, pizzas, and of course, French fries—or as the British would say, chips.

In Amman, in particular, it's all there. You

name it, we have it. The concept of fast food was introduced in Jordan a long time ago. However, it only gained momentum in the late 1980s, going on to flood the market in the 1990s. It is something that says a lot about our changing attitudes.

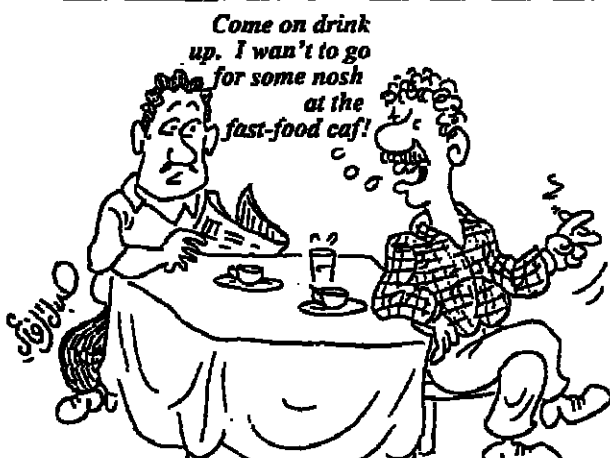
Today, it is not only easier for the whole family to eat outside or to bring food from fast-food chain stores, but it is also trendy. You know, being with the crowd, the modern people, or as somebody once said on a British television comedy series, the "beautiful people."

And being trendy is the buzzword in today's fast moving society. The coca-cola culture, the

one that dominates Western society, has caught up with us. Today, it is not only about flashy things we wear or don't wear, but about the different brands we look at. What sort of soft drinks we consume, and what sort of things we eat. Crisps, potato chips, and of course the different fast-food dishes we fancy.

And the more the merrier. Jordan is no different to other societies. Today, you find fast-food takeaways everywhere. They are not only in Shmeisani either, which used to be the traditional haven for finger-licking chicken and tasty

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# The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly



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## Pipeline likely to dominate Parliamentary business

By Ibtisam Awadat  
Star Staff Writer

DAYS BEFORE the convening of Parliament, Lower Houses deputies are today grappling with what could prove to be a hot potato.

The case of the Iraqi pipeline is occupying both the deputies and government business. Minister of Trade Hani Al Mulki has already set up two committees to look into the issue. Deputies are also up in arms.

The 12-inch pipeline—which was once used by the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC)—was supposed to carry oil from Iraq to Haifa, during the 1920s-1930s period. It was built by British and American engineers. It was later abandoned by the British and American governments. The Lower House deputy, Hani Hani, said, "This 12-inch pipeline was used during the Second World War to transport petroleum from Iraq to Haifa via Jordan." Hani added, "Both were shut down after the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948."

The two pipelines are still in good quality, and can be used to transport oil for another 100 years," Hani confirmed.

The pipelines issue came into the news after it was reported that one of them was sold to a contractor. However, deputies spoke out when it was realized that the contractor was actually dismantling both pipelines.

"The selling of the pipelines was instigated by now former Minister of Finance Marwan Awad. He approached several government institutions. In November 1996 to know if it was possible to benefit from the IPC pipelines, but they showed no interest," Hani told The Star.

Following a visit by deputies to the site in Ruweisah last Friday to get to the bottom of the story, they noticed that the two pipelines were in the process of being dismantled, instead of the one initially agreed upon in the JD 250,000 sale contract.

According to the deputies a number of unexplained details surround the case. "At the beginning, reports indicated that they were water pipelines. However, the published ads

for the bid suggested that they were petroleum pipes," Hani said. "Despite the fact that the pipes are in good condition, the ad stated that they were out of date."

Since their visit, deputies pushed the government to force the issue, and the Prime Minister promised to study the case carefully. The committees' findings will be presented to the Lower House later this week.

"We know that 20 kilometers of the line were sold last year. The question is whether this was a part of the deal or not," the deputy stated. "A violation of the contract has compelled the government to take action. We are not sure if it is a ploy to sell buried and old pipes," Hani added.

"What happened during the bid is nothing short of corruption. The bid was attended by only three contractors, two of

them being brothers," said Khalil Ateyya, a member of the Lower House. "Measures which followed were also incorrect, since the deal was given to a contractor after the first round of the tender, when normally there should be a second round," Ateyya continued.

Thirty-eight kilometers of each pipeline—which were not included in the contract—have vanished," Ateyya emphasized. According to the deputy, the Ministry of Finance should have put a detailed study before taking any step to get rid of the IPC. They should have also transferred the bid to the Ministry of Energy and not the Ministry of Water.

A parliamentary committee was formed to update the Lower House with the latest developments on the pipelines case.

The coming ordinary session on 28 November promises fierce debates concerning several important issues. "We will work on some internal matters concerning our council, such as the elections of the Speaker, and formation of different parliamentary committees," Mahmoud Kharabshah, rapporteur of the Legal Parliamentary Committee said.

National issues will be on the top of the agenda, but these will immediately center on the pipelines case and the water crisis. "The pipelines, the water crisis and its latest developments and the traditional role of the legislature will be discussed," Kharabshah added.

The government has already told the contractor to cease work on dismantling the pipes and to return back the parts that violated the original contract.



Two swamp wallabies playfully fight against each other on a cold but sunny day at Zurich's zoo on 25 November. As temperatures keep dropping only few animals can be seen in their outside pens. Reuters

## US awaits the outcome of UN-Iraqi talks

By a Star Staff Writer

US OFFICIALS stated, Wednesday, 25 November, that President Bill Clinton will not respond immediately with force to Iraq's latest defiance of the UN weapons inspectors, but will assess Baghdad's overall record of cooperation in the coming days, before deciding whether to revive the threat of air strikes.

The comments came hours after a special session by the UN Security Council, in which members consulted on the latest developments in the Iraqi relationship with UNSCOM.

US air strikes, if indeed they do happen, are the foundation of US strategy, Clinton's aides decide, on whether to unleash the weapons again, following Iraq's latest refusal to turn over documents detailing Iraq's biological and chemical weapons. These documents were at the core of the recent Security Council session.

Iraqi officials maintain that most of the requested materials do not exist. Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Al Sabah told a news conference in Baghdad last week, that Iraq has already

handed over millions of papers to the monitors, and that no more files exist.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz rejected UNSCOM Richard Butler's demand for Iraqi cooperation with the inspectors. He accused Butler of going beyond his mandate. Aziz said that the monitors would be able to inspect chosen areas, only in the presence of UN special envoy Prakash Shah.

The Security Council didn't blame Iraq for its defiance, and discussed the three letters sent by the Iraqi leadership to the UN last Friday, in which Iraqi officials demanded a comprehensive review of the sanctions imposed on Iraq since 1990.

Political analysts say the latest action by Iraq is an attempt to put the issue on the world agenda. It came a week after President Clinton put on hold the use of force.

"We are not going to get bogged down at this stage of the dispute about these documents," one US source said. "The administration wants to see first what UNSCOM may get from Iraq, in the way of its cooperation. We're not sure how long it may take, but we think that for the

time being forbearance is the wiser course," he added.

The Security Council, on the other hand, agreed on the sale of another \$5.2 billion in Iraqi oil over the next six months, to buy humanitarian aid for the Iraqi people.

Prospects of a new US military strike on Iraq appeared to grow late last week, as leading congressional Republicans expressed their desire to see Iraq punished for the way it treated Butler's demands. Some Congressional members said Iraq's stance was dishonest, going against its promise made earlier this month to cooperate with the UN inspectors.

"Our position remains clear," said White House spokesman, adding that, "if Iraq doesn't intend to live up to its commitments to comply, we remain prepared to act."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak called US hopes to carry out further air strikes against Iraq as "nonsense." Mubarak also criticized the US support for the Iraqi opposition movements, in an attempt to topple the current Iraqi regime.

## Decision to drop UJ course leads to uproar

By Ibtisam Awadat  
Star Staff Writer

THE DEBATE on whether to normalize ties with Israel or not took a new turn this week, following a decision by the University of Jordan (UJ) to drop a voluntary course about the Palestinian struggle to liberate their homeland.

The issue is a contentious one, with public opinion divided on whether the Kingdom should initiate more rapid moves that will lead to fuller normalization of ties with Israel.

The recent decision taken by the University of Jordan to drop its "Palestinian Cause and the Arab-Zionist Conflict" course provoked strong reactions from students at the UJ.

"After looking at this year's study plan, we were shocked to learn that this particular voluntary course had been dropped from the curriculum," says Al Hareth Fakhri, Head of the Student Council at the UJ.

"This is not the first time

that they have tried to cancel this course as last year, the former President of the University of Jordan submitted a petition to the Deans' Council," Fakhri continued, "but the Student Council rallied support and managed to reverse the decision."

The voluntary course outlined the Palestinian struggle, and used to be available to all first year students at the University. However, according to the 1998-99 curriculum, it will now be limited to Political Science students only. The course in question outlined the role of the Hashemites in defending the Palestinian territories, identified those who had sacrificed their lives for the defense of Jerusalem, and provided details on the wider Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Student Council—the body that represents the 22,000 students at the university—responded by sending a memo to the President of Jordan University, Dr Waleed Al

Manni, condemning the decision.

The Student Council received a written response which justified the cancellation of the course, saying the move "was part of a wider, ongoing review process aimed at updating the curriculum to meet the demand of students today." The letter added, "Changing the study plans is a dynamic process, which needs a period of time to monitor the results."

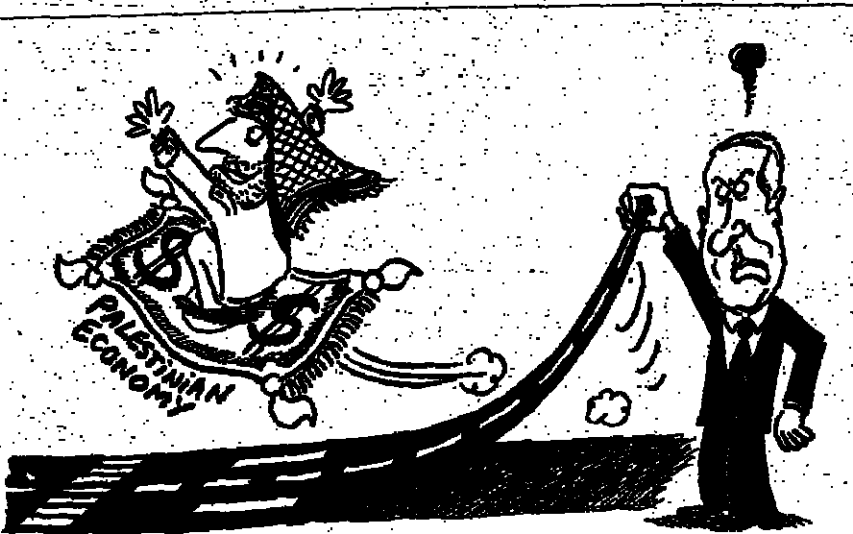
The official response from the university claimed that the course has not been canceled; simply the contents of the course had been divided between other courses still available to the students. Fakhri, the undergraduate student at the Sharia faculty, told The Star.

The move to drop the course came after some high level Israeli politicians expressed their dismay at the contents of the course. The decision also went against the findings of a recent poll distributed amongst the student caucus, which rejected normalizing ties with Israel.

"I believe that the cancellation of the course was a mistake, because the conflict with Israel is ongoing, and the Palestinian question has yet to be resolved," said Dr Thyab Makhadmeh, professor of Political Science at the University of Jordan. "It is our responsibility to inform the younger generations about the conflict, as the peace agreements so far have only led to an increase in Israeli settlements," Makhadmeh told The Star. "Should we really be normalizing ties with Israel, at a time when the official slogan of the Likud Party is 'Greater Israel,' which clearly goes against the current redeployment of Israeli troops from the West Bank," Makhadmeh said.

The decision by the University of Jordan to drop the course also drew criticism from members of Parliament. "I have often warned of the consequences of the recent peace agreements between the Israelis and the Palestinians," said Nazih Ammarin, an opposition deputy at the Lower House, "and this is a classic case of the strong imposing conditions on the weak."

## Palestinian airport opens amid jubilation



GAZA AIRPORT OPENS...

By Lee Hockstader

DAHANIYA, Gaza Strip—An electric grin lighted Abeer Jor's face and stayed there all morning. For the first time, airplanes were landing on Palestinian-controlled soil, and Jor couldn't get over it.

"It's something big, something beautiful," stammered the Palestinian Airlines ground stewardess, 26, smilingly turned out in blue pants suit, traditional headscarf and ruby red lipstick. "Finally we have our airport, and this is the most important day in our hopes to be a state."

Three years after the idea was born in the aftermath of the Oslo peace accord between the Palestinians and Israel, exuberant Palestinians on Tuesday finally got a functioning airport. They immediately named it after their leader—Yasser Arafat International Airport—and thousands of them streamed toward the runway from nearby shantytowns to dance, cheer, weep and gloriously assert their right to statehood. The first flights were received by Pal-

estianians with jubilation, and the inauguration of the \$65 million airport was invested with all the pageantry and stuff of statehood—military bands, VIP passes, security escorts and official receiving lines. The main event

was the glitzy and long-awaited opening of the graceful Moorish terminal, with its handsome control tower and opulent VIP lounge served by a 10,100-foot runway in the southern tip of the Gaza Strip.

Still, the symbols of statehood weren't quite what they appeared. A safe distance away on the tarmac, a handful of plainclothes Israeli security men watched the mayhem from behind their sunglasses, an almost-unnecessary reminder that Israel will control the airport's security even as Palestinians celebrate its existence as a potent sign of sovereignty.

Israel will also determine which countries are permitted to fly into the airport, whether Israeli passengers can ever use it (so far the answer is no, on security grounds) and

when the Palestinians' permanent air traffic control equipment will be released from storage in an Israeli port. For now, the airport has borrowed an Israeli mobile system to control air traffic.

"We don't want to interfere so much with what they're doing over there, but we still are going to have control over who's coming in and out and what's coming and out," said Shlomo Dror, an Israeli military spokesman. "OK, the Palestinians are running the airport, but we are there to ensure the security—nothing less, nothing more."

Finessing such niceties, Arafat presided at Tuesday's gala, snapping salutes to his honor guard and marching down the long red carpet to greet the first plane to touch down, an Egyptian Air Airbus 320 jet that arrived at 8:29 am, precisely a minute early. By midday, eight more aircraft had followed, bearing dignitaries, celebrities and officials from the Arab world and Europe, all of them hailed by a beaming Arafat and a confusion of horns, drums and bagpipes.

The 69-year-old Palestinian leader, perhaps the most manic globetrotter of the

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World  
REPORT



# Yugoslav Ambassador says his country is back on the peace track

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Jordanian-Yugoslav relations, the current situation in Kosovo, sanctions, economic cooperation and tourism was the crux of the interview *The Star's* Nader Ojailat had with Mr Oliver Poterzica, the Charge d'Affaires at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Excerpts follow:

Can you tell us something about the bilateral relations between Jordan and Yugoslavia?

Relations between Jordan and Yugoslavia have been traditionally friendly. Yugoslav experts came to [this country] in 1953, to co-operate with the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company in Al Russaifa city. However, unfortunately, the undesired and tragic events have influenced Jordanian-Yugoslav bilateral relations and their positive and development. But we hope that our relations will develop according to our mutual interests. There is space for optimism. The relations we built in the last two years, have proved this. Several months ago our famous Institute for Vaccines presented different kinds of serums and vaccines to the Jordanian Ministry of Health to the value of more than \$100,000.

In addition, more than 20,000 Jordanians have studied at Yugoslav universities. Thousands of Yugoslav women are married to Jordanians, and are living here with their families. I would like to take this opportunity to convey the best wishes of our leadership, and of all the Yugoslav community to Jordan for the speedy recovery of His Majesty King Hussein.

Can you tell us something about the present situation in Yugoslavia?

The situation is in the process of stabilization. After the agreement between the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and the US envoy Richard Holbrooke, the situation in

Kosovo and Metohija, the southern province of the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia, is getting better and becoming more and more normal every day. The terrorist attacks by the Albanian separatists are still the only obstacle to full normalization. But, we hope and pray that those attacks will not harm the political settlement of the crisis. Few days ago our government and the representatives of the different ethnic groups in Kosovo and Metohija have put on the table the proposal for the agreement in the political framework of self-governance in the province. We are open for dialogue and for any positive idea from any corner of the world. We know that there is no solution but a political one. We know that there is no alternative to peaceful co-existence. Yugoslavia hopes that very soon the representatives of the political parties of the Albanian national minority in Kosovo and Metohija will accept open invitation for negotiations. This is the request of whole international community. The UN Security Council insisted in Resolution 1203 on this issue. Yugoslavia is a multi-racial country, a country for all citizens regardless of their origin, race, religion or language. We respect and implement all the international norms on the human rights, national and ethnic rights. Our future is definitely directed towards integration.

What about sanctions against Yugoslav Airlines?

There are no sanctions against Yugoslav Airlines. You may mean the unilateral meas-

ure of the European Union related to our internal affairs, as the restriction has been imposed on the Yugoslav Airlines since last September. We believe that the EU measure is already obsolete. Because of the positive development regarding Kosovo and Metohija, we are sure that such restrictions are going to be abolished soon.

How do you see economic relations between Jordan and Yugoslavia?

The conflicts in the Balkans and embargo against Yugoslavia caused serious setbacks to Jordanian-Yugoslav trade. At the end of the eighties, the volume of trade between the two countries reached about \$170 million annually. In the last few years, we recorded oscillations in trade and economic cooperation. Nevertheless, the development and reviving of the economic ties is our priority. There is a lot of potential, and a lot of unused opportunities.

Yugoslav companies are again participating in tenders in Jordan. Yugoslav traders buy

different Jordanian goods. There are considerations on joint ventures, and transfer of technology. We are optimistic about Jordanian-Yugoslav trade and economic cooperation.

How do you see cooperation in the tourism field?

Tourism is definitely one of the most important and promising industries in the world. Yugoslavia has a developed tourist industry, not only in the sense of hosting but also in sending tourists abroad. We believe that there is plenty of room for cooperation. Yugoslavia has what is called 'summer tourism' on the Adriatic coast and in various surrounding lakes. We also have 'winter tourism' and 'medical tourism'. No doubt, Jordanian tourists will appreciate our seaside and spas. Also many Yugoslavs are spending their holidays in Tunisia and Egypt, besides Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Turkey. Air travel between Belgrade and Amman takes 2.5 hours. This is convenient for the development of tourism between our countries. But, one should always bear in mind that development of tourism is extremely difficult. It demands patience and hard work if it is to be profitable. If there is determination and good will, both profit and results can be quickly achieved. I am sure that the Yugoslav Airlines will make additional efforts to support the exchange of the tourists in both directions.

Are there other fields of bilateral cooperation?

We are keen to develop cultural relations. Next year we will work hard to have our representatives at the Jerash Festival. We are going to invite some Jordanian writers to participate at an international gathering to be held in Yugoslavia. The visit of our Minister of Sport last March paved the way for cooperation. Our karate national team participated in a tournament in Irbid. We believe that some other teams from Yugoslavia will visit Jordan next year.



Poterzica

## Terry Fox An odyssey of endurance

By Rasheed Al Roussan  
Special to The Star

IN 1977, a Canadian teenager by the name Terry Fox was told by his doctors that he had a malignant tumor in his leg, and that he was about to die. At the time, however, no one knew that this one-legged patient would become one of the emblems for cancer survivors.

"Dreams are made, if people try," said Terry Fox, when he started a fund raising project called the 'Marathon of Hope.' The attempt began in 1979, when he planned to run across Canada in order to raise money for cancer research. In 1980, his journey was complete when he arrived at the Atlantic Ocean. Terry Fox had run an average of 43 kilometers a day, through six provinces.

The Canadian press began to recognize his unquenched thirst for survival. In the same year, Mr Isadore Sharp, the President of the Four Seasons Hotels, decided to organize a fundraising run that would be held every year in memory of Terry Fox.

The Marathon of Hope went on like an Olympic torch, spreading to all the corners of the world. Volunteers carried Fox's torch, collecting millions of dollars for the sake of those who are suffering, and awaiting a cure from cancer.

Last year, the human legacy of hard work and dedication reached Jordan, when over 9000 Jordanian volunteers participated in the walk. "That



Star reporter with Canadian ambassador photo by Mahmoud Shawkat

was no comparison to this year, however, as the number of participants was astonishing. Twenty five to 30,000 volunteers took part in the event," said Ms Ursula Holland, a secretary at the Canadian Embassy in Amman.

The walk this year took place on Friday 23 October, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Huss-

ein, and was organized by the Canadian Embassy and Al Amal Cancer Center, in cooperation with his Royal Highness Prince Rafat Bin Zeid.

Last Tuesday, the Canadian Ambassador, Mr Mike Molloy, held a reception in his residence, thanking the individuals and organizations who sponsored and took part in the Terry Fox/Al Amal Center event.

Mr Molloy expressed his gratitude for all those who spent time and effort in making the walk a success in Jordan. "I was just thrilled to see the enthusiasm from all those young Jordanians who participated in the event. The media coverage was extremely accurate, and was keen on getting the message across," he explained.

The ambassador pointed out that there are plans to expand the event to other countries in the Middle East. "We already have Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and we are hoping to expand around the Arab region as a whole."

Mr Abdulah Al Khatib, the director of the General Union of Voluntary Associations and Al Amal Center told *The Star* that, "Al Amal Center is currently treating around 1000 patients, 50 percent of whom are Jordanians. The rest are from 19 other Arab countries."

However, there is a lot to do. Al Khatib emphasized that the Center still has to find a solution that will allow some facilities to be provided to the patients free of charge. In addition, the center's budget—which reached \$8.6 million last year—doesn't cover all its demands and expenses, and that government assistance has not been forthcoming. At the same time, the center hopes to introduce an insurance scheme very soon. "We are hoping that over 200,000 Jordanians will contribute to the Center, paying an annual cover fee of 16 dinars a year," Al Khatib explained.

On the subject of public assistance, Dr Mohammed Khair Mammor, minister of social development said that, "The ministry is the legitimate mediator between Al Amal Center and the other official organizations, and our duty is to ensure that the center is provided with the needed financial and communication facilities."

The concept of running or walking to raise money for cancer relief has caught the imagination of the world, and Jordan in particular. This year, corporations and institutions were also keen to get involved, and there was major sponsorship from Al Ahli Club, Marriott Hotel, and the Arab Bank.

Even after his death, the torch of hope that Terry Fox gave to world is burning stronger than ever. His dream of fighting and finding a cure to cancer has turned into a reality for many. The final words must go to the man himself: "I am not a dreamer, but I do believe in miracles. I have to." (Terry Fox)

## Christ's Baptism site highlighted by Italian expert

AMMAN (Star)—A special lecture by Professor Michele Piccirillo was held on 21 November, at the City Hall of the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM).

The lecture—in English—was entitled "The Sanctuaries on the East Bank of the Jordan River," and was organized in cooperation with the Friends of Archaeology, and the GAM.

During the lecture, Prof. Piccirillo shed light on the historical background of Mount Nebo, which is considered to be one of the most important tourist sites in Jordan. He stressed the importance of the mountain as a historical monument, and urged for more public awareness in preserving archaeological sites.

Prof. Piccirillo also mentioned that a Royal decree emanated by His Majesty King Hussein in September 1997, set

up a Royal Commission for the development of the Baptism site of Jesus Christ on the Jordan River. "According to the Gospel (John 1, 19-34), John the Baptist and Jesus Christ preached at the site," said Prof. Piccirillo.

Born in 1944 at Caserta in Italy, Father Piccirillo is an archaeologist at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem, part of the Custody of the Holy Land. He received degrees in Sacred Theology, becoming the director of the museum at the Franciscanum, and has directed restoration projects around the area of Mount Nebo since 1973.

The Baptism site dates back to the Byzantine era and is located at the beginning of Wadi Kharrar in Tell Kharrar, two miles from the Jordan River. Moreover, pilgrims often

visited the delta of the Wadi near the mountain, where a church on the east bank is located.

Some believe that the church is the site of Jesus Christ's baptism. The sanctuaries of Wadi Kharrar were visited by pilgrims up until the 14th century.

Modern explorers have often tried to locate the ruins of the buildings, but with few results. It was later, in August 1995, that His Royal Highness Prince (Qazi Bin Talal paid a visit to the site and saw the ruins near the Wadi, alongside the water spring.

The Royal Commission met later to determine how to proceed with the project in the shortest time possible. The aim is to "develop studies on the three divinely-inspired religions, and to point out the common legacy between these religions" and the Jordan River.

## Palestinian airport opens amid jubilation

Continued from page 2

world's leaders, is guaranteed to be the new airport's most frequent flyer. On Wednesday, Arafat will be his first outbound passenger, heading to Paris on his private plane for talks with French President Jacques Chirac.

For two years, Arafat and his aides did battle with Israel over every detail of the airport's operations, in the meantime starting a Palestinian national airline that based its four planes across the border in Egypt. It was thanks largely to a push from the Clinton administration that negotia-

tions with Israel finally led to last week's signing of a protocol authorizing the airport's opening.

Arafat is said to have resisted his aides' entreaties that the airport be named in his honor, perhaps because his Palestinian Authority agreed with Israel that it be called Gaza International Airport. But Gazans seem intent on calling it Arafat International, no matter what the agreement says.

The airport is likely to benefit Palestinians as a number of ways that go beyond their pride in state-building.

Tangibly, it is expected to provide an immediate and badly

needed filling for the Palestinian economy, one that could boost the gross domestic product next year by more than 10 percent.

The airport will allow fruits, vegetables, flowers, fish and other perishable exports to reach markets in the Arab world and beyond, without regard to the periodic closures of Gaza Strip land crossings declared by Israel, which have cost Palestinian exporters dearly.

Intangibly, the airport is an incalculable psychological boost for Gazans, an overpopulated patch of 11 million people cut off from the world by barbed wire on three sides and the sea on the fourth. Suddenly, from their squalid ghettos, Gazans will be able to leave on flights to the Arab world and beyond, providing they have an Israeli-approved passport and enough cash.

Sixty or seventy percent of

Gazans have never left the place in their whole life," said Ahmed Abdel Rahman, a top Palestinian official. "With free access to the world now, they will feel they're human, like you. It's not a ghetto anymore, it's an open airport and an open society."

For hundreds of Palestinian youths who poured onto the runway, the prospect of air travel was less impressive than the sheer bulk of the planes landing there. Many had never seen an aircraft on the ground in their lives.

"Where would we ever have seen one this close?" said student Sobhi Shurra, 17, a student. "We've been living under Israel's occupation. We've only seen planes on TV. I expected them to be big, but not this big."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

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## A busy theatrical season at the New English School

ON WEDNESDAY 18 November, the New English School was proud to host the Performance Exchange Theatre Company (PETC). PETC is an international professional touring company based jointly in London and Tokyo. During their visit to the school, actors Daniel Foley (UK) and Risako Ataka (Japan) performed scenes from Shakespeare, followed by a mini-production of Macbeth in both English and Japanese.

Students from grades 8 to 12 attended the show and participated in the production. After the show, a level theatre students and GCSE drama students took part in a special Actor's Workshop, where they experienced a range of control exercises and rehearsal techniques applicable to their courses of study, culminating in specific text delivery scenes.

The visit was planned to be in line with the school's philosophy of appreciation of fine arts. Later the same day, a level theatre students visited the actors in another performance of 'Madam Butterfly' at the Inter-Continental Hotel. An exercise in theatre criticism followed the production.

On Thursday evening, some drama students from the New English School visited the Jordanian Theatre Festival to see a play directed by one of the schools nine drama teachers, Firas Al Masri. The play, entitled 'The Dark Emperor', was an entry in this year's festival.

On 25 November, students and school staff ventured to see their teacher and colleague, Ruba Attieh, perform at the festival a play directed by M. Jarrah.

## JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional  
report on Jordanian  
news and views edited  
by Marwan Al Asmar

## Special parliamentary session

Both houses of Parliament met in a joint session, Saturday, to listen to the latest developments in relation to the health of His Majesty King Hussein. The one-day special session of the Upper and Lower Houses is in accordance with article 28 of the Constitution which states that Parliament must meet if the King is out of the country for more than four months. Prime Minister Fayez Al Tarawneh explained to senators and deputies the latest situation on the King's health. He said that the medical treatment has been a success and that all the affected cells had been neutralized, and that the King would be coming back to the Kingdom after the last part of the treatment has been completed, and after he has had a rest. Earlier, the Prime Minister said that the King would be back in the country at the end of December. The parliamentary session was presided over by Speakers of the Senate and the Lower House, Zaid Al Rifai and Saad Hayel Al Srouf. The ordinary session of the Lower House starts on 28 November, and the Speech from the Throne will be given by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent.

## Protest

A protest by members from opposition parties, professional associations and women's organizations was held outside the American Embassy in Amman, Sunday. Tens of people turned out to protest the belligerent American policy against Iraq. During the protest, Nael Barakat, who is currently head of the higher committee of opposition parties, and Leila Khalid, central committee member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, presented a memorandum to the Embassy criticizing American policy in the region. The memo stated that US policy in the area—especially towards Iraq and Palestine and its threat against Syria, Libya and Sudan—creates negativity in the region, because it is based on the premise of maintaining American military power in the region.

## Crimes

Two shocking crimes were committed this week. The first took place last Sunday, when a young man was murdered in the Hashimi Shamali area by one of his friends. The 28-year-old youth died after being stabbed 29 times all over his body. Police later arrested the murderer who confessed to the crime, saying it was the result of past differences regarding his younger sister. The second crime occurred two days later, when a father killed his own daughter in a national park on the outskirts of Amman. The father had stabbed her several times, before slitting her throat. The man later surrendered to the police and confessed to the crime. The father told the police that he was trying to save his family's honor. In addition to these gruesome crimes, a decomposed male body was found in Ma'an earlier this week. The security forces identified the victim after unearthing the body. Intensive investigations are underway to discover the criminal.

## Doctors

The Jordanian Medical Association (JMA) is dismayed about the increasing number of foreign doctors who are practicing in this country. JMA officials say that these doctors are practicing without a license, something which is totally unacceptable. The association urged the government to act quickly against these doctors and repatriate them.

## Agricultural workers

Official sources stated that Prime Minister Dr Fayez Al Tarawneh, instructed the Ministry of Finance to pay the outstanding salary of the employees of the Jordanian Union of Agricultural Workers. About 74 laborers in Deir Allah have not received their salaries for the last three months. They were also promised an extra months pay which they have not received either. That means the Treasury would now have to cough up to JD 24,000.

## The fast-food culture

Continued from page 1  
hamburgers.  
Now these joints can be found everywhere.  
In fact, it can be safely said that this once alien concept has taken Jordan by a storm. In this respect we

have become addicted to this very big wheel of fast food nosh. I guess this is the price we have to pay for modernity, modernization and the need to keep pace with the modern people.

When did you first feel you needed to write?

Since I was a little girl I felt the urge to write. My passion for writing developed every day, because of the enclosed atmosphere I was living under.

Can you tell us how do you get an idea for a book?

My first published novel was called 'Lam Na'ad Jawari Lakm' (We Are No Longer Your Slaves). When my first novel was published by Dar Al Ma'aref in Egypt, one of the biggest publishing houses, I knew I was becoming a full-time professional writer.

broader picture of Arab Palestinian society following the 1967 war, where the individual and the family were defeated, resulting in a defeated society.

How do you choose your characters?

When I first start a novel I sketch my characters in my head, but as I proceed these characters develop, sometimes taking a totally different shape than originally intended. The characters must uphold the theme.

Do you think that Palestinian women writers are different

from Palestinian male writers in portraying the Palestinian society?

As a female writer, I believe that I was able to really dig into different aspects of Palestinian society. Few men can do like-wise, because when you look into a mirror you do not want to see how ugly you are. You do not want to see the dimension of things. Men are not used to taking a brave look at things that might hurt their soul. A woman on the other hand, is different. This is because of her education, and how she is raised as a marginal being and an outsider. She is accustomed to look at things not in a glorified manner, but in a more realistic one. However, this does not mean that all women writers see this reality. Several neglect their unprivileged role in society and ignore in the process all marginal people, because they think that they are leaders and have become part of the elite. A woman writer has to have feminist awareness not an ideology. Middle class people can afford to sit and write anything and produce beautiful pieces, but unfortunately this is

not the reality of our society.

You are one of the pioneering writers who use spoken and classical Arabic in your novels. Is this acceptable?

It's true that I was amongst the first to start such a trend, and I thought this was appropriate because my novels are real life stories focusing on real life people. Can you imagine for example Khadra, an ordinary woman from the slums in Nablus speaking in classical Arabic, or the intellectual speaking in the same language as Khadra. We live in a society with different people, and these people speak in a different manner.

You also use 'frank and blatant language'. Is this accepted by your readers and critics?

Writing in frank and blatant language gives the novel a living atmosphere. The language of the street is simple and crude, and this is what I seek to convey. The Arabic language is not sacred. It is up to us to play around with it.

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Renowned Palestinian writer Saher Khalifeh

# 'Men are not used to taking a brave look at things that might hurt their soul'



Saher Khalifeh



One of Khalifeh's earliest novels

broader picture of Arab Palestinian society following the 1967 war, where the individual and the family were defeated, resulting in a defeated society.

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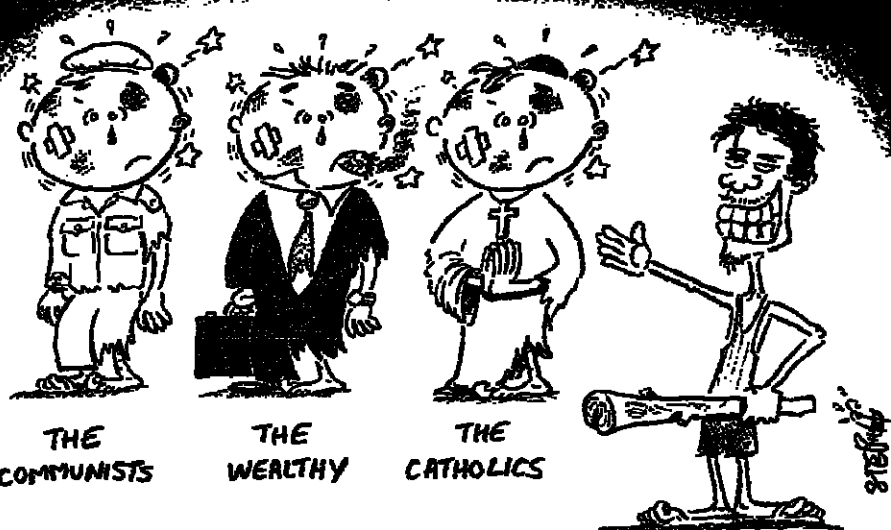
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## COMMON SCAPEGOATS IN INDONESIA :



## Our Say...

## Landmark in the Palestinian struggle

THE OPENING of Gaza International Airport this week amid much fanfare and celebration is a unique event in the checkered history of the Palestinian people and an important landmark on the long and arduous road to statehood. It took Palestinian and Israeli negotiators more than two years to reach a final agreement on this project, which, in addition to its political significance and symbolism, promises to rejuvenate Palestinian trade with the outside world away from Israeli interference.

The opening of the airport, which received nine aircrafts from Arab and European countries on its first day of operation, comes as Israel begins to fulfil its obligations under the Wye River agreement. Few days ago, Israeli troops began withdrawing from tens of West Bank towns and villages and handed them over to the Palestinian Authority. The coming weeks and months should witness additional ceding of land to the Palestinians bringing the total area under PNA authority to about 40 percent.

There is no doubt that an air of optimism has now replaced the mood of gloom and doubt that had engulfed the region ever since Benjamin Netanyahu took over as Israeli premier more than two years ago. The implementation of agreements and the fact that the realities of occupation are slowly changing revives hopes that a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict can be achieved. But it would be foolish to believe that the road to a just and comprehensive peace is now open and clear. Israel is not honoring its commitments in good faith and as both parties prepare for the final status talks it becomes clear that issues like the future of occupied East Jerusalem, the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the fate of Palestinian refugees are likely to prolong if not derail the negotiations.

There are many opponents of a political settlement with Israel among the Arabs and Palestinians. These critics argue that since Israel, supported by the United States, has the upper hand it will impose its own brand of justice on the Palestinian people. They argue that Israel will never allow the Palestinians to fulfil their most cherished dream of establishing their independent state on their national soil. But in the absence of other alternatives, negotiations are all that is available for the Palestinian leadership.

Jordan has been in the forefront in backing the Palestinian cause. His Majesty King Hussein played a pivotal role in bringing the Wye deal to a successful culmination. The Palestinians need the support of their Arab brethren at this crucial stage of their struggle. Much can be said and done to promote Palestinian demands and aspirations especially in the United States.

It would be a good move now for the Palestinian leadership to call for an Arab summit as it prepares to go into final status negotiations. A common Arab stand on Jerusalem and other issues, especially the Golan, South Lebanon and Palestinian refugees, will send the right message to the Clinton administration which is actively involved again in the Middle East peace process.



Members of the Zapatista rebel group salute supporters before meeting with Congressional mediators for peace talks, 22 November. The guerrilla leaders vowed to press ahead despite the talks being on the brink of collapse late on Saturday when mutual recriminations threatened to derail the first face-to-face encounter between the two sides in nearly two years. Reuters

## The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

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## Case for the Tawjihi exams

By Star Staff Writer

THE TAWJIHI exams have outstayed its welcome and as a result many people argue it should be abolished because it doesn't equip young people with the right training to face society.

There is a school of thought which says that now is the time for our educated young men and women to understand what goes in our society by being raised in a "correct social manner". This is a view vociferously expressed by Mustapha Mohammad Al Far in *Ad-Dustour*.

But what about those who are still at school? Should we raise those pupils "socially" as well and not worry about their educational progress. If we are to support the view of those in favour of abolishing the Tawjihi—and that's a big "if"—we would need a far superior method for assessing our pupils, as judging them by the results at their own schools will be grossly unfair. For we all

know that each school in the Kingdom has different approaches to teaching and assessment. This approach might leave a lot of intelligent and bright kids out of universities, because of the system of grading in their final exam.

Al Far seems to suggest that abolishing the secondary school exam would somehow get rid of the rote learning method, because it would ease the pressure on the students to get high grades. In this respect, they would concentrate more on the process of learning rather than judiciously memorizing what's in the books.

But this is also too naive. The problem of rote learning is not only found in the later years that lead up to the Tawjihi exams. We encounter this problem with our children during every day of their school lives. From the

moment they start their first grade, pupils are required to memorize by heart almost all of their subjects, even Arabic language. This process kills any potential creativity within the child, and leaves us with a bored child who can not wait for the weekend.

So instead of attacking a totally legitimate way of assessing our students' learning, we should be concentrating on changing our educational system to an experimental one to activate the minds of our children. We should give our students the chance to draw the correct conclusions by teaching them the method of trial and error. By introducing such a system we can produce more intelligent and successful adults, who can understand the mechanisms of our society in a much better way.

One of the reasons Al Far provides for abolishing Tawjihi is that there has been a lot of complaints from the families of students who are preparing for the exams. He points out that the exam puts the whole family under pressure, and sometimes they have to change their lifestyles in order to provide a suitable study environment.

But this is really unnecessary, because we all went through the same circumstances when we sat our exams, and they were not the source of major worry or anxiety to our families. On the contrary, students today have all the comforts to study hard and should be redirecting their attention towards better achievements at school.

The problem is not to do with Tawjihi, but with the fact that our young men and women today just want the fun things in life, but they do not want to work for them. They expect everything to be handed down on a silver platter, and we should not be encouraging them by abolishing the Tawjihi exam.

## Eye on Jordan

## Spoils of war

## The human cost of America's arms trade

By John Tirman

EUROPE NOW faces two perplexing extradition cases. The first and more famous is that of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, accused of thousands of murders during his 17-year dictatorship in Chile. The second involves Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish guerrilla leader who fought an authoritarian regime in Turkey for almost 15 years. Both cases present wrenching questions for human rights and peace.

While the Pinochet case is not easy to resolve, it looks simple compared with Ocalan's. The prosecution of Pinochet, for example, might have a divisive impact on a healing Chilean society. In Ocalan's case, a bitter civil war still rages.

The 49-year-old Kurd has conducted a violent guerrilla campaign against the Turks since 1984. He was based in Syria, which protected him until Turkey threatened war this autumn. Ocalan fled to Russia and was arrested after flying to Rome last week. Turkey has demanded extradition, Italy, which will not extradite for political prosecutions or if the accused may be executed, is studying the matter.

The cause of the rebellion by Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, is indeed political—namely, the savage treatment of the Kurdish population in Turkey for 70 years. The Kurdish people, settled in southeastern Anatolia long before the Turks arrived from Central Asia, lived peacefully under the Ottoman Empire. But under the Turkish Republic created by Kemal Ataturk in 1923, Kurds have been subjected to repeated pogroms. They have been forbidden from using their language and cus-



Kurdish guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan

tom. The southeast is impoverished and shorn of the central government in Ankara.

These indignities stirred several uprisings, but the PKK's is the most serious. It has led the Turkish military to crack down on all expressions of dissent over its Kurdish policy. No Kurdish political parties can function. Several Kurdish members of Parliament, including the dissident Leyla Zana, are jailed. More than 3,200 Kurdish villages have been evacuated by the military, with 2 million villagers forced out of their homes. Some 35,000 people have died in the fighting between the PKK and the

military since 1984. The military will not consider any political solution to the uprising, such as granting full language rights or permitting Kurdish parties, because of its rigid Turkish nationalism.

The evacuation policy and continuing repression are among the worst human rights violations in the world. The extradition of Ocalan to Turkey, which would certainly result in his execution, would reinforce the Turkish military's belligerence. Without some conditions on extradition, Ocalan's trial and death would accomplish nothing.

Here is where the application of law must be flexible. To

their credit, the Italian governmentize this. But how to proceed? To flatly deny extradition is wrong; Ocalan almost certainly ordered many executions of noncombatants like Turkish teachers in the southeast. These are vicious, criminal acts. But before sending him back, the Italians should insist on certain conditions.

The most ambitious condition would be an actual end to the civil war, with the Turks granting full political and social rights to Kurds and the PKK demobilizing. Truth commissions and war crimes investigations could follow. But that might be too much to hope for.

Instead, the Italians may choose a less dramatic course: Demand the release of political prisoners such as Zana in exchange for Ocalan. This would be momentous and symbolic, because Zana and other dissidents represent the nonviolent path of reform. By prosecuting Ocalan only for criminal acts of violence and by not imposing a death sentence, Turkey would in effect be saying it too, is choosing the path of peaceful reform. Ocalan could be persuaded by the Italians to guarantee a permanent cease-fire.

It would then be time for Turkey's friends, like the United States, to insist on the political reforms that would satisfy Kurdish grievances. In fact, the United States is crucial to overcoming Turkish resistance to such a bargain.

In these volatile political cases, extradition can be a tool to achieve something larger. For Pinochet, it might be possible to prosecute without imprisonment, establishing an important standard of accountability. For Ocalan, the real goal is to prevent more deaths and refugees and to broaden human rights. In both cases, justice is served imperfectly so that peace is served more generously.

## Middle East Beat by Khairi Janbek Apo and Ocalan

IN TRUTH, Turkey's reaction to the release of Abdullah Ocalan in Italy was fairly predictable. The same applies to the Italian verdict, upholding the constitutional law of the land. The movements of Mr Ocalan (Apo) have been troublesome to Turkey, and to some extent to its neighbors as well, as Turkey almost went to war with Syria over the issue of hosting Apo. But now there is a new development. A fully integrated EU country, and a strong member of NATO, seems determined not to yield to Turkish requests for the surrender of Apo's leader—a man they view as public enemy number one.

This new perspective to the problem is indicative of the complex intricacies relating to the Kurdish question. Both Mr Barzani and Mr Talbani led factions have been involved in a bloody conflict against the Iraqi regime, as well as against each other, and with the PKK headed by Apo. At times, they are both treated as respectable oppositionists and representatives of their own people by the international community, while at others, they are merely ignored and left to their own devices.

Of course, this assessment is often influenced by the realism of the Kurdish national movement, which changes between demands for total independence and autonomy.

The question of Apo takes a different dimension for various reasons. The PKK is involved in a bloody military conflict with the Turkish state, for the creation of an independent socialist Kurdistan, on what is considered as Turkish sovereign territory.

At the same time, Turkey as a member of NATO is not viewed as a pyrrhic by the international community—a status usually reserved for Iraq. For Turkey, the hosting of Apo in Italy is equivalent to Ankara hosting the leader of the Italian 'Brigade Rossi'.

Attempts at setting norms for international relations are still based on expediency, which is the real reason for the malaise that sets nations and peoples apart. Geographical definitions are set aside for the preferential dealings with individual countries, and moral grounds are shifted in favor of momentary vested interests.

Approaching the millennium, visionary leadership is still being viewed in terms of fire-power, as if in the last two thousand years the only advances and achievements of human society have been weapons of mass destruction.

The current crisis between Italy and Turkey is a result of the eternal differentiation between terrorism and freedom fighting. One nation's terrorists are another's freedom fighters, and even in the age of globalization, the international community is still reluctant to approach these core issues.

When it comes to the Kurdish question, it is evident that the international community is only interested in propping up one group against another. At times Iraq, Iraq, and Turkey have all been put under the spotlight. The fact remains that much more could have been done in terms of defining the ethnic and political rights of all concerned.

To be fair, the Turkish political system is open to all, irrespective of ethnic origin, and this is seen by the presence of almost one hundred and fifty Kurdish MPs in Parliament. Dialogue is the key, and every politician should do his utmost to prevent the crisis from escalating. What will happen next is open to question, but further Turkish and Kurdish blood must not be spilled.

## Food for thought

## 'The Racial Bomb'

THE REPORT published recently by the *Sunday Times* on the development of a new Israeli biological bomb at the Negev Desert Institute in Israel, is disturbing to say the least. The report says that Israeli scientists are working on trying to differentiate between Israeli and Arab genes, the purpose of which is to target only Arabs and leaving Israelis unharmed.

If true this would really be something preposterous. Can a bomb, for instance, distinguish between a father of an American origin and an Arab mother, and again children of pure Arab origin. Could they really be targeted by the so-called "racial bomb." A major row has since erupted between the Israeli government and the newspaper over the report, but this is an ethical issue that concerns all of us.

We can't ascertain the authenticity of the report, but such news would certainly raise more than an eyebrow on the Israeli military machine and its race to acquire the most fatal weapons of mass destruction.

Obsession of insecurity, lack of confidence, negative thinking of superiority and race have allowed the fanatics to think in such a way. Israel committed itself to peace

with its Arab neighbors, but acquiring huge quantities of chemical, biological, nuclear, arms and other international banned weapons would indicate otherwise.

The refusal of Israel to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and its refusal to allow inspection of its nuclear sites is a clear-cut indication that war and military thinking dominates the minds of Israeli officials. It is illogical to sign peace agreements on the one hand, and develop war arsenals to eliminate humanity and bring back the good old days of suffering on the other.

Instead, technology has to be directed in the interest and prosperity of humanity. The long-awaited peace in the region can be easily destroyed, a disaster will claim the highest number of innocent lives, because of the criminal and cruel mentality of developing weapons of mass destruction that is inversely proportional to the degradation of human values. If we don't give peace a chance, we could be rapidly heading towards an abyss.

Ehsan Nisari

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Business  
scene

■ The Jordanian government has sold 23 percent of its shareholdings in the Jordan Cement Factories to the French Financial Group "Lafarge". The deal, which was signed at the Amman Financial Market, totalled JD 72 million. The JCF per share value was sold at JD 3,600. Share trading in the company has gone back to normal at the AFM floor.

■ A group of Jordanian businessmen has left Amman last week for a special visit to South Africa. The group, comprising 12 members, is headed by Fakiri Babil, a member of the board of the Jordanian Businessmen Society. The group will tour South Africa's main economic institutions, covering both the public and private sector.

■ Jordan has exported 200,000 tons of cement to the Palestinian Authorities this year. According to a seminar held in the Palestinian city of Ramallah last week, the exports were subject to Israeli border controls which hindered the final amount. The seminar ended up with a commitment to widen exports, to incorporate the Gaza Strip as well.

■ The Ministry of Tourism signed two agreements last week to improve Karak Castle, and to promote tourism projects relating to the tourist site. Minister Akel Beltaji, who signed the agreements, said that the main objective behind these accords is to continue to promote the Kingdom's tourist sites abroad.

■ The Middle East Bank for Investment (MEBI), signed a financial agreement to increase its capital to JD 20 million with the "General Bank in Lebanon". The MEBI bank now owns 50 percent of the MEBI's shareholdings. The latest move comes in line with the Central Bank directive to raise the capital of banks to JD 20 million.

■ A large Chinese economic delegation is expected to visit the Kingdom this week. The group, which comprises members from the public and private sectors in China, will hold various meetings with the Jordanian economic officials.

Foreign  
Exchange

Wednesday, 25 November 1998

	Buy JD	Sell JD
0.7080	0.7100	
1.1510	1.1508	
0.4124	0.4145	
0.4801	0.4825	
0.1227	0.1233	
0.5624	0.5652	
0.3667	0.3685	
0.0419	0.0421	

# 'Visa Jordan Card Services'

## New era in cooperation

AMMAN (Star)—Visa International, together with eight local banks, announces the formation of a new company, the "Visa Jordan Card Services". This is to build upon the successful foundations of the Jordan Payment Services Company which has been handling the acquiring business of Visa in Jordan since 1991.

The joint venture, the first to be undertaken by Visa in the Middle East, marks the culmination of a growing partnership between Visa and its member banks and the sharing of a common vision to expand the usage and acceptance of Visa cards in Jordan.

Visa Jordan Card Services will focus on increasing the number of retailers and other merchants who accept the Visa card at point of sale. In particular, there will be an emphasis on electronic acceptance, providing efficient and cost-effective processing services and running a high quality ATM network.

Chairman of the Board of the Visa Jordan Card Services, Mr Jawad Hadeed said that, "Visa International recognizes the strength of Jordan's economy and the good investment environment in Jordan."

"Visa Jordan Card Services is the first joint venture which Visa has undertaken in the Middle East and is part of our shared vision to expand the usage and acceptance of Visa cards in Jordan. I would like to personally thank our Jordanian Member banks for joining with us to participate in this exciting venture," said Anne Cobb, Visa regional president.

"The global vision of Visa Jordan Card Services is to develop an acceptance infrastructure designed to encourage mass issuance and usage of payment cards and to build a common platform for the introduction of banking services based on new technologies such as chip cards," explains Ms Cobb. "We want to make it easy for both Jordanian citizens and foreign visitors to use their Visa cards to pay for all kinds of goods and services in the Kingdom."

Mr Hadeed, who is also the Chairman of the Arab Banking Corporation added that, "Visa International has a 10 percent share in the newly established enterprise which is a holding company that owns the Jordan Payment Services Company."

Visa Jordan Card Services will be open to all Visa Members in Jordan. Initially, ownership will be held by Visa



Jordanian banks unite!

International and the following banks: Arab Banking Corporation (Jordan), Arab Jordan Investment Bank, Bank of Jordan, Cairo Amman Bank, Jordan Investment & Finance Bank, Jordan Islamic Bank and the Housing Bank.

Mr Abed Al Qader Al

Duweik, general manager of the Housing Bank, says the reasons why the Jordanian Banks have sought to set up this new company lies in the development and growth of financial mechanisms.

He added that the introduction of the new visa 'electron' in Jordan is in keeping with

the country's approach towards the international markets.

Over the past year, Visa has seen its card numbers increase by 63 percent to 43,000 cards at the end of the second quarter 1998.

Mr Duweik pointed out that Jordanian banks must inno-

vate and develop the new means of credit payments in order to compete in the market. He said that this is urgent since the region can expect intense competition from giant international financial institutions because of globalization and free economy.

Visa predicts that the number of cardholders will increase even more dramatically as soon as Visa Electron cards start to be issued in early 1999. The number of Visa ATM machines in the country has also tripled in the space of one year, to over 150 by June 1998.

"Around the world, we are upgrading the technological infrastructure so that it is ready for the new generation of chip cards. With a common platform, based on the Java programming language, the next generation of Visa cards will open up a whole new world of possibilities, and is a way of reaching new cardholders who are currently outside the banking system," Ms Cobb pointed out. She added that this is both a challenge and an opportunity, not only for the rest of the world, but also for Jordan. With the formation of Visa Jordan Card Services, the card business in Jordan will be in a better condition to meet that challenge.

## Bethlehem 2000

## Gateway to tourism

AMMAN (The Star)—Bethlehem 2000 is the slogan that has been chosen for next year's millennium celebrations at the site of Jesus Christ's birthplace.

Regarding the planned festivities, the Intelligentsia for Research and Studies held a press conference in Amman on Sunday, and presented its Bethlehem 2000 directory, outlining the development potential in Palestine.

Jamal Naji, the director-general, told the meeting that the main objective behind the project is to draw the world's attention to the East Mediterranean region, including Egypt, Palestine and Jordan. "We would like the whole world to know of our preparations for the millennium, which will highlight the historical aspect of the Holy Land over the last 2000 years," adds Mr Naji.

To this effect, Intelligentsia has initiated many projects and activities to promote the tourist



sectors in Palestine, Jordan and Egypt. These activities include participating in the international tourist exhibitions, and inviting tourist institutions such as travel agencies and companies involved with tourism from all around the world.

Intelligentsia hopes that it's recently initiated project, better known as Bethlehem 2000 Gateways, will raise people's awareness to the archaeological sites in the Levant.

Youssef Horani, director of public relations at the corporation, told the audience that the current archaeological sites in the three concerned countries comprise over 45 percent of the whole tourist sites in the world.

The corporation also signed a special agreement with the organizers of an international tourist exhibition, due to be held in the Italian city of Milan in February 1999.

Mr Naji stated that by participating in this exhibit, a real opportunity will be presented to the tourist institutions in the three countries. "Participating in this exhibition represents the first stage of a comprehensive promotional project. It will also render an invaluable opportunity for the tourist sectors in our Arab region, to promote themselves internationally," said Mr Naji.

The Bethlehem 2000 directory will be published in February 1999. It is promised to be the only one of its kind, showing an organized reference for all those interested in having full knowledge of the Bethlehem 2000 project area, including the archaeological sites and tourist facilities. The directory will also be open for all the tourist institutions in Egypt, Palestine and Jordan, to advertise their services and programs for the much awaited millennium.

"Intelligentsia hopes that Bethlehem 2000 will mark the beginning of a new era of peace and justice in the region, and we hope that all those taking part in this pioneering project will be prosperous and successful," concluded Mr Naji.

Financial Times  
Syndication

## Oil price falls on pessimism over Opec

By Paul Solman

WORLD OIL prices fell to new lows in London this week, with some analysts predicting the market would not recover next year.

Analysts had previously suggested that the unusually cold winter forecast for the northern hemisphere would boost energy consumption and crude prices.

The benchmark January contract for Brent blend on the International Petroleum Exchange fell to \$11.15 a barrel at one point, 15 cents below its previous low recorded 10 years ago. Last week, the contract was trading at \$11.51, around \$1 lower than at the end of the previous week.

Traders have begun to focus

on the next meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, to be held in Vienna next week. However, there is little expectation that it will bring any agreement of further cuts in production.

Copper prices dipped on the London Metal Exchange, the three-month metal coming close to the 11-year low of \$1,570 a tonne it reached last week. By the close of the day, it had recovered to \$1,615.50, a gain of \$29.50 on the week.

Palladium prices rose almost 4 per cent after Johnson Matthey predicted supply would fall short of production by one million ounces this year. This week, the price was \$300.50 an ounce in late London trading. Gold was 'fixed' in London

at \$295.60. The precious metal lost \$1.50 on the week. Robusta coffee futures were markedly weaker this week on the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange after a bout of selling from trade houses. The most actively traded November contract, which is nearing expiry, closed at \$2,015 a tonne, down \$106 on the day but up \$40 on the week.

Cocoa also sank to new lows after a poor week. The December contract closed last week at \$954 a tonne, \$9 down on the day and \$21 down on the week.

## Is Jordan's medical sector in good health?

By Ghassan Joha  
Star Staff Writer

THE DEVELOPMENT of the medical sector in Jordan is not new. Caring for its people has been high on the list since the Kingdom gained independence in 1946. The Ministry of Health was founded four years later, with the aim of coordinating facilities and drawing up comparable standards for various treatments.

By the 1990s, however, the medical sector in Jordan was starting to feel the pressure from any ever-increasing populace. A wide spread development review of facilities was undertaken in order to prepare the Kingdom for the challenges ahead, whilst maintaining current international standards in patient care.

Although the Kingdom is well-known worldwide for its medical sector, experts have conceded that more coordination is needed between the concerned institutions, to promote and pursue their activities in the best way possible.

Recent studies have showed that one of the major challenges facing Jordanian society is the growing numbers of the young people, who comprise approximately 45 percent of the population today. Planning for the future, when this age group will begin to lean on the medical sector, was one factor highlighted. The cost of medical fees was also causing concern to the public, at a time when society was being subjected to more diseases and infections as a result of increased industrial development.

The same study identified a lack of coordination within the Jordanian medical sector, with various departments doing the same work, leading to general inefficiency. Medical officials, however, denied these allegations, reassuring the people that



the sector was under control. The rapid growth rate of the medical sector made it very difficult to maintain regulations and procedures, especially when competition between the public and private health sectors heated up.

The numbers of doctors in the Kingdom increased from 55 in 1950, to as many as 11,000 doctors this year, meaning that there are 17 doctors for every 10,000 people. The number of pharmacists and nurses also recorded a rapid increase, due mainly to social and economic reasons. People have often viewed the medical sector as one of the most prestigious professions in society.

With the rapid growth rate and an increase in diseases, some investors tried to exploit the situation for their own interests, by developing high-quality medical services for the private sector, at the expense of the public as a whole.

This exploitation reached nightmare proportions, as the number of private hospitals has dramatically increased in the Kingdom over the past five years. With one of the highest growth rates in the world, this attention to the well off only meant that the vast majority of the population was being excluded from the latest medical developments.

Consequently, pressure was released on the public sector, as

the demand was taken up by the private sector. This meant a reduction in public medical insurance, but caused an equal reduction in the quality of service provided by the public care institutions. Soon, it was evident that the rapid progress of the private medical sector was made at the cost of the public sector.

Last June, the Jordanian Medical Association issued a new pricing list for medical services. The list, which was produced after months of intensive studies, showed that the minimum fee for a medical checkup is JD 3 in the public sector, rising to JD 7 in the private sector. The list set a maximum limit for checkups at JD 5 for the public sector, and JD 10 for the private sector.

Experts are now saying that a reverse in the whole legislative and regulatory medical field is required, in order to give more assistance to the public hospitals, and to develop their facilities. In addition, future medical investment should have one eye on ensuring that there is greater technical administration, more reasonable medical fees, and better qualified accounting and storage procedures.

This can only be achieved with the full cooperation of all concerned parties in the public and private medical sectors.

## BritishBank thrives in region

THE BRITISH Bank of the Middle East (BritishBank) is one of the oldest financial institutions in Jordan.

Today it is considered as the largest and most widely represented international bank in the Middle East with 31 branches throughout the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Autonomous

Areas and an offshore banking unit in Bahrain.

The Bank has been a member of the HSBC Group since 1959, one of the world's leading international banking and financial services organizations. HSBC Holdings is incorporated in England with its head office in London. Over 25 principal members deal with the Bank all over the world. Its

assets is expected to reach about US\$ 484 billion, by 30 June 1998.

BritishBank has a unique relationship with the Middle East dating back to more than a century. Founded in London in 1889, the Bank pioneered in the banking business in the region and stayed for decades the only bank committed to supporting the area.

In addition to its Middle Eastern network, the BritishBank has branches in Mumbai and Trivandrum, India and in Baku of Azerbaijan. It also has private banking operations in London and Geneva. Its head office is Jersey in the Channel Islands. Employing over 2,470 full time staff, the BritishBank is the major shareholder in the Middle East Finance Company Ltd. of the UAE. Its total assets by 31 December 1997, stands at GB£ 4,365 million. The Bank offers unique services such as a full range per-

sonal banking products and services delivered to customers through the largest branch network of any international bank in the Middle East. These services also encompass a wide array of credit, deposit and electronic banking products, including personal loans, car loans, time deposits, credit cards and other numerous banking facilities.

The Bank offers as well investment opportunities which include fixed-term guaranteed return products and an extensive range of open-ended investment funds covering global equity and bond markets.

The Bank continues to be a leading provider of financial solutions to personal banking customers. With common service standards across the HSBC Group, the BritishBank is well placed to finance trade between the Middle East and the rest of the world.

SPANISH INVESTORS and businessmen representing the state of Leon and Qashalish in Spain just completed a visit to the Kingdom. The delegation included Abdel Qader Khairuddin, Fernando Rojo and Isidro Villace.

The Spanish businessmen signed an agreement with Mr Bassem Yassin, the general manager of Al Majarra Commercial Inter-mediation Company. The intention is to organize a Spanish industrial exhibition in Amman, which will take place on 21 March, 1999, and continue until 1 April. About 700 Spanish businessmen representing 316 factories will participate in the exhibition.

Mr Abdel Qader stressed that all the necessary steps will be taken in order to make the exhibition a great success.

He pointed out the importance of Jordan's geographical location means that it will



(From left) Yassin, Villace, Rojo and Khairuddin

become an international investment center for the Middle East in the coming years.

The Spanish investors visited Jordanian factories to know more about the quality of Jordan's industrial products, in addition to the facilities pro-

vided to foreign investors.

Furthermore, the businessmen met Mr Haider Murad, the head of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, who promised to present all the help he can. Mr Murad added that he is keen to establish mutual coop-

eration and commercial exchange between both sides.

The business delegation also visited Ad Dustour, where they met with its managers and were shown around the newspaper building, and viewed the latest printing machinery.

The  
**Star**  
Jordan's political, economic  
and cultural weekly  
**OnLine**

<http://star.arabia.com>





Armed Palestinian police raise their AK-47 assault rifles in the air as they dance at the opening of the Gaza International Airport, 24 November. A Royal Jordanian Airline plane (rear) is on the tarmac, the third plane to land that day. Reuters

## Global crises spotlight declining UN clout

By Craig Turner

UNITED NATIONS — When war threatened to break out between the United States and Iraq nine months ago over weapons inspections, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan made a dramatic flight to Baghdad and brokered a deal that pre-empted the conflict and made him a hero in much of the world.

But when a similar confrontation simmered this month—largely because the Iraqis had broken that agreement with Annan—the secretary-general sat conspicuously on the sidelines, refusing entreaties that he intervene again.

Aides said Annan saw little point in trying to reassemble the pact that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had shattered; the situation, they said, was fundamentally changed.

But Annan's limited role also was emblematic of the United Nations' diminished diplomatic clout in recent months.

The Iraq situation is only one in a multiplying set of challenges to the credibility and authority of the United Nations these days. From Congo to Yugoslavia to Afghanistan, governments are defying or ignoring the will of the world body.

And, in a little-publicized vote by the Organization of African Unity last summer that many diplomats here see as the most troubling development of all, 53 African countries agreed to defy UN Security Council sanctions against Libya by resuming commercial airline flights into the North African nation.

It was described by one prominent Western ambassador as an "enormous act of civil disobedience," with nearly one-third of the UN membership breaking their obligations under the world body's charter.

Meanwhile, the UN reform program launched by Annan has stalled amid bickering and power grabbing by the 185 member states, the organization continues to struggle with a chronic shortage of funding, and the Clinton administration is seen as unable or unwilling to exercise the strong leadership most here expect—if not always welcome—from the United States.

After a burst of optimism, new direction and drive that began with Annan's appointment in January 1997 and lingered through his first 18 months in office, the organization seems adrift and threatened with irrelevance.

"This place is just hunkered down; it's just not effective," said a Western diplomat with long experience here. One senior US official says the United Nations is at a crossroads and that how it responds to the current challenges may mold the organization for years to come. There are still success stories, but they tend to be behind the headlines. Every year the United Nations cares for more than 22 million refugees and displaced people and delivers more than 2.9 million tons of food to the hungry around the globe. Dynamic new leaders have revived the UN Center for Human Rights and the World Health Organization. The myriad agencies of the organization have been forced by Annan to work in greater harmony and with more common purpose. Links formed between the United Nations



UN inspectors weapons team leave the United Nations headquarters for their daily inspection of sites in Baghdad 25 November. Iraq on Wednesday welcomed as "positive and encouraging" news that the Security Council had not agreed to blame it in its row with UN arms inspectors over prohibited weapons documents.

and private humanitarian, human rights, environmental and advocacy organizations have helped change the ground rules of international diplomacy. American media mogul Ted Turner's new foundation has handed out the first \$35 million of his 10-year, \$1 billion gift to the organization and provides a template for other potential private donors.

But on the big issues of war, peace and global stability that command the immediate attention of the public and of world leaders, the organization seldom exerts decisive influence.

For example, the most recent conflict with Iraq was resolved—at least temporarily—when Hussein's government backed down at the threat of a massive air attack by the United States and Britain. The show of gunboat diplomacy in the Gulf accomplished what months of admonishments and pleadings by the Security Council could not. The council's impotence in influencing Baghdad is part of a pattern. In recent months the council has been divided and powerless in the face of a burgeoning war in the Congo; the fraying of the UN-brokered peace process in Angola; suspected massacres and wholesale human rights violations by the ruling Taliban militia in Afghanistan; and the eruption of a nuclear arms race in India and Pakistan.

"It's apparent that an increasing number of rogue states feel free to thumb their nose at the United Nations," said Edward C. Luck, executive director of the Center for the Study of International Organization at New York University. "They're really sticking their thumb in the Security Council's eye and the Security Council is blinking."

In the Balkans, the United Nations deliberately has been shifted to a secondary peacekeeping role behind NATO, an arrangement that is being duplicated elsewhere around the world as regional security organizations take on interventions once reserved for the United Nations.

Few outside experts or diplomats here blame Annan for the United Nations' recent frustrations. "I think there is a

real sense of malaise and lack of direction at the UN, but it doesn't stem as much from the secretary-general's performance as it does any lack of consensus among member states on what they want the UN to do," Luck said. "Vision by the secretary-general is great and action by the secretary-general is great, but it doesn't substitute for a divided, feckless membership, which is what we have at the UN today, particularly on the Security Council."

Many analysts see the current disarray as inevitable given the end of the Cold War, the great glue that held international alliances together. Today, countries form shifting blocs based on geography, economics or a common religious faith.

Brazilian Ambassador Celso L.N. Amorim calls this the "variable geometry" of the United Nations, and said nowhere is it more evident than on the Security Council, the organization's most powerful organ.

"The sense that the council has clear, common goals has faded," said Amorim, who is completing the first of his two years on the body.

Like other ambassadors here, Amorim also worries that the council (which operates in near-total secrecy and is dominated by its veto-holding five permanent members, the United States, Britain, China, France and Russia) is increasingly estranged from most member states. "They look at the Security Council as almost extraneous, almost as if it isn't part of the UN," he said.

A senior US official suggests the organization is still searching for its post-Cold War persona and might work out these problems in time.

The official also disputed expressions both inside and outside the United Nations that American leadership of the world body is weakening. He noted that both Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and her deputy, Thomas R. Pickering, are former UN ambassadors and "the UN is never out of sight of this State Department."

Nonetheless, the United States has been without an ambassador to the UN since

September, when Bill Richardson left to become energy secretary. His designated successor, Richard Holbrooke, who brokered the 1995 peace accord that ended the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is considered a diplomatic heavyweight, but his formal nomination has been delayed by questions about his financial dealings. Holbrooke is not expected to arrive before the new year.

Meanwhile, Peter Burleigh, a career diplomat, heads the US delegation. While Burleigh is admired here for his knowledge and experience, he lacks the Cabinet status and political heft of Richardson or Holbrooke.

Annun, meanwhile, is setting new goals. His most recent theme has been to try to position the United Nations for a role in setting the global economic agenda, and he has been outspoken in recent speeches in reminding listeners of those poor countries that have been left behind by worldwide merging of markets.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Israel surrenders land to Palestinian control

By Tracy Wilkinson

KABATIYA, West Bank—Firing assault rifles into the air, Palestinian police marched into towns and villages in the West Bank on Friday as Israel gave up land it has occupied for 31 years.

Israel transferred an additional 9 percent of the West Bank to full or partial Palestinian control, fulfilling a crucial step in a new US-brokered peace agreement. The relinquished land was fragmented and desolate; still, Friday's hand-over represented the most concrete movement seen in nearly two years of a stalled peace process.

In addition, Israel released 250 Palestinian prisoners and approved the opening of a Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip next week.

The steps are part of the Wye River agreement signed at the White House on 23 October after a hard-fought nine-day summit. The interim agreement is meant to build on the 1993 Oslo peace accords and avert renewed warfare. In it, the Palestinians agreed to fight terrorism and anti-Israel incitement.

It is the withdrawal from land, however, that is the most dramatic aspect of the accord and is exacting the highest political cost for the conservative government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Palestinians believe that the transfer moves them closer to the creation of a sovereign state.

Here in Kabatiya, the largest of 28 towns and villages passing to Palestinian rule, red-green-and-black Palestinian flags and pictures of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat festooned cars, bicycles and building fronts. Newly arrived police were setting up temporary headquarters in a youth center.

Today Kabatiya, tomorrow Jerusalem, read one of many Arabic banners. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their capital.

While apprehension grew in nearby Jewish settlements, Palestinians celebrated. "Land of wonders," Zaid Zakariyah, a wrinkled man in a black-and-white-checked "kafiyeh," marveled as he watched a convoy of powder-blue trucks roll through Kabatiya carrying the first contingent of Palestinian police. Zakariyah had fled Israeli forces in the 1948 War of Independence, and then had



A Jewish settler plants the Israeli flag atop one of the buildings at the ancient ruins of Sabastiyah, north of Jenin, in a bid to establish a new Jewish settlement, 22 November. A few dozen settlers arrived earlier in a bid to set up a new settlement in the ancient ruins. The Israeli army watched as settlers erected flags, held prayers and began cleaning out several buildings. Reuters

seen his daughter killed and his home demolished by Israelis during the Palestinian Intifada, or uprising, that ended earlier this decade. "Today Palestine is here."

Crowds cheered, car horns blared and Kalashnikovs crackled as the town center became one huge traffic jam with the arrival of the police.

Palestinian security services do not have the cleanest human rights record, but the pride of self-rule, for the moment at least, obscured such concerns.

Kabatiya is renowned as a hard-line Palestinian town whose sons clashed fatally with Israeli troops throughout the Intifada. It was also known in early Intifada years for gruesome killings by Palestinians of fellow Palestinians accused of collaborating with Israelis.

The area around and including Kabatiya is part of the West Bank that has had civilian Palestinian authorities for the last three years. But the territory remained under Israeli army jurisdiction for all security matters.

After Friday, this portion of the West Bank is off-limits to the Israeli army. "We consider today to be a step toward the

final solution, the liberation of all our land," said Kabatiya Mayor Mohammed Abu Rub. The euphoria of the Palestinians contrasted sharply with the sadness and bitterness of many Israelis.

"I am sure that for every Jew and Israeli, the cutting up of the land of our fathers is a difficult, painful step," Israel's dovish defense minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, who helped negotiate the Wye agreement, wrote in Friday's *Yediot Aharonot* newspaper.

As part of the Wye deal, Israeli authorities Friday also released 250 Palestinian prisoners, out of a total of 750 they have agreed to free.

Palestinians were furious, however, because about 150 of those released Friday were common criminals instead of "political" prisoners. They agreed to go along only when Israel freed five Palestinian policemen to sweeten the deal, Israeli radio reported.

Israel will not release inmates who were implicated in murders of Israelis. Israeli officials say they had to pad the release roster with common criminals to meet the agreed quota of 250, already

having freed thousands of people they regard as terrorists in the five years since Oslo.

Israel's withdrawal Friday is the first phase of a three-stage 13 percent pullback to take place over the next three months. The hand-over was delayed when the Palestinians accused the Israelis of changing the maps at the last minute to retain supervision of key roads.

Israeli Major General Moshe Yaalon, the central army commander, and Israeli Jaber, the Palestinian General Security Chief, helicoptered the maps to Arafat, who agreed to the arrangement on a temporary basis, clearing the way for Israeli troops to place concrete markers designating new boundaries and signs warning Israelis they are approaching Palestinian territory.

Large red billboards tell Israeli motorists that Palestinian police are not authorized to arrest them, that they should "avoid confrontations with the Palestinian police" and to "report anything unusual" to the Israeli army.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Israeli roads bisect Palestinian property

By Lee Hockstader

AL KHADR, West Bank—All her life, Halima Sbeih, a Palestinian farmer in her sixties, has worked the olive trees on her family's West Bank land, a hard-scrabble plot tended also by her father, her grandfather, her great-grandfather and his father before him. The land, she says, has belonged to her family "since God created the Earth, for millions of years."

Not for much longer. On the eve of Israel's first troop withdrawal from the West Bank in two years, the government is expropriating swaths of Palestinian land, including some of Sbeih's, to build bypass roads for Jewish settlers.

The roads are part of an

unintended effect of the US-brokered interim peace accord, known as the Wye River Memorandum, signed last month at the White House. The agreement, under which Israel will turn over an additional 13 percent of the West Bank to Palestinian control, was meant to advance the cause of Middle East peace while lowering the political temperature in the West Bank.

As it happens, the accord has ignited fresh tensions over land in the West Bank on hilltops where Jewish settlers rushed to stake a claim before it was too late, on the outskirts of settlements where Israeli soldiers have fortified their positions with trenches and cement bunkers, and on arable Palestinian land where Israeli

bulldozers have roared in to carve new bypass roads. "What kind of peace is this?" said Imad Salim, 25, a Palestinian farmer near the Arab village of Al Khadr, just south of Jerusalem. "If peace means losing our land, what good is it?"

A dozen new roads—more than 50 miles worth in all, some up to 100 feet wide—will enable West Bank settlers to skirt Palestinian communities en route to other Jewish enclaves, as well as to Israel proper. The government insists the new roads are a security lifeline for Jewish settlers living in West Bank communities that will become more isolated by the Israeli troop withdrawal, which will leave 40 percent of the West Bank in Palestinian hands.

"Our goal is to prevent confrontations between the two groups," said Shlomo Dror, spokesman for Israel's civil administration in the occupied territories.

Few Palestinians regard road-building in the West Bank as being just about convenience. They say the intent of the new roads, and the effect, is to strangle the natural growth of Palestinian towns and villages; to divide and control the West Bank by slicing it up and to defeat hopes for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

"This is Israel's policy," said Abdullah Ghneim, mayor of Al Khadr, a Palestinian village hemmed in on two sides and soon on a third by Israeli bypass roads. "Their ultimate aim is to block an independent Palestinian state and to destroy any geographical continuity between Palestinian territories."

The roads were approved by Israel's cabinet—which was nudged by American pressure

into a pullback from the West Bank it never really wanted—at the same meeting in which it assented to the withdrawal. Half the roads are already under construction, and the plan is to complete all 12 by the end of a three-stage troop withdrawal next February.

Here on the outskirts of Al Khadr, the first Israeli bulldozers moved in last weekend, carving rights-of-way for the new roads along the vineyards and olive groves tended by local farmers. The bulldozers, protected by dozens of Israeli troops, tore 50-year-old olive trees from the ground and pulverized earth-and-stone embankments that had demarcated property lines here for generations. When furious Palestinians threw stones at the bulldozers, the troops responded with rubber-coated bullets and tear gas.

The road they are building will connect Efrat, a Jewish settlement a mile from Al Khadr, to a main north-south highway running from Jerusalem to Hebron.

Israel insists that it is taking pains to minimize the disruptions caused by the new roads, choosing routes, even indirect ones, that avoid privately owned and actively farmed land. In the event expropriation is necessary, the government says, it compensates owners for the land. Palestinians, who regard the land as not for sale, say they refuse the payments on principle.

"I don't know how much they offer because I'm not interested," said Ali Mousa, a farmer who expects the new bypass road to wipe out about half his vineyard outside Al Khadr. "This is Palestinian land."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Palestinian prisoners!

By Samaa Abu Sharar

HOORAY, AS the Americans would say, should be the word of the day. Palestinians ought to be delighted that Israel has freed 250 prisoners in compliance with the latest Wye agreement. There is only one problem however; those freed are actually not what ordinary Palestinians had hoped for.

Quite a lot of those had criminal records and are not political prisoners who fought the Israeli occupation.

Those who deserve to be freed are still in prison and some on hunger strike. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly said that he will never free "murderers of the Israeli people" in an insinuation that no political prisoners will be freed. To meet his part of Wye, he has instead let go non-political Palestinian prisoners.

But the onus in the end must rest with the Palestinian leadership.

How could they accept this side of the

deal, one that was agreed upon in advance? Israel can't not be blamed this time, after they keep repeating they are only looking after their interests.

The Palestinian Authority, on the other hand, should bear the consequences, especially of the mass arrest that has developed since the Wye agreement.

The inauguration of the Gaza airport, called appropriately after the Palestinian President, and the celebrations held on the occasion, will not derail the momentum of this matter. The airport has just been opened and the celebrations did take place. But, the issue of the Palestinian prisoners will remain alive.

Israel has still to release 500 more prisoners. The question is are they going to be the same as those 250 freed by the agreement? The Palestinian National Authority should make it abundantly clear to Israelis that they would accept nothing less than what is demanded by its people.



# Japanese ready apology for wartime atrocities

By Dele Olojede

NANJING, China—After surveying the exhibition of human bones and gory pictures of rapes and beheadings inflicted by invading Japanese soldiers on unarmed residents in this wartime capital, Zhao Liying rendered a familiar verdict.

"They are not human," proclaimed the schoolteacher, who recently traveled from the western Yunnan province to visit the memorial to an estimated 300,000 victims of what is commonly known as the Japanese Rape of Nanking.

President Jiang Zemin went to Tokyo yesterday (Wednesday), the first Chinese leader to undertake a state visit to Japan. He plans to deal with the deep animosity felt by many Chinese toward their more prosperous and until 1945, more militarily powerful neighbor to the east.

The significance of the visit is underscored by the expressed willingness of the Japanese government to formally apologize for the large-scale atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army during the invasion and occupation of China in the first half of the century.

Particularly in the 1930s, Japanese soldiers raped and murdered tens of thousands of Chinese women, committed pogroms against hundreds of thousands and performed horrific biological warfare experiments on captured soldiers and civilians right up to the time the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 to end the Pacific war. The expected apology follows a similar one delivered last month to the visiting president of South Korea, Kim Dae Jung, whose country was likewise ravaged by a militarist Japan on a rampage across Asia. Many of the estimated 100,000 so-called "comfort women," sex slaves conscripted for the battlefield pleasure of conquering Japanese troops, were Korean.

War-time atrocities are not the only issue confronting Jiang and Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. Also looming is the question of Taiwan, the Chinese island once colonized by Japan but which now considers itself an autonomous state. The Chinese mainland sees Japan as a key ally in its efforts to achieve its long-term goal of reunification and would like a clear-cut pledge to the territory during Jiang's visit.

"If there is nothing from the Japanese side, that will be a very big setback for Jiang's visit, even if they apologize for the war," said Zhang Yundong, director of the Institute for Japanese Studies in Beijing. "The war is the past. Taiwan is now."

But for many Chinese, the war looms far larger than Taiwan. Ever since 1945, Japan had sought to deflect responsibility for its well-documented war role, fashioning a national memory in which Japan is cast as the victim, particularly of American aggression. Unlike in Germany, where to deny the Holocaust is a crime, most Japanese deeply resent references to wartime atrocities, until now making it politically impossible for succeeding prime ministers to offer little more than half-hearted expressions of regret.

It is remembered with particular bitterness here in Nanjing, a city of nearly 5 million that has twice served as China's capital, first in the early years of the Ming Dynasty in the mid-14th century and again after the end of imperial rule earlier this century. By the time the Japanese arrived here in December 1937, the city already was in chaos and the Nationalist army of Chiang Kai-shek was in flight from the city.

The Japanese commander, Gen. Matsui Iwane, rode in a few days later, wheeled his horse in the direction of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, and led banquets for the Son of Heaven, Emperor Hirohito. "Great Field Marshal on the Steps of Heaven, banzai! Ten thousand years of life!" By then, the wholesale rape and murder of prisoners of war and civilians was in full swing. People were rounded

Nanjing massacre were attacked by extremists.

The government will not even pay direct reparations to surviving comfort women, resolving only to pay them through an unofficial fund ostensibly set up by private individuals and euphemistically called "The Asia Peace and Friendship Fund for Women."

Until now, Japan has sought to deflect responsibility by paying what critics call hush money, in the form of generous financial aid, to many Asian countries. Japan is the largest aid giver in the world, most of it to Asian countries, most of it with few strings attached. South Korean President Kim returned home last month with a new \$3 billion aid pledge. Since China re-established diplomatic relations with Japan 25 years ago, followed by a treaty of friendship five years later, the Communist Party renounced claims to war reparations in exchange for billions of dollars in soft loans and other financial assistance.

But money has failed to buy Japan love in Asia. Enduring bitterness from the war and suspicions of Japanese intentions are the primary reasons the country has been unable to play any leadership role in the region. By failing to forthrightly deal

with the past, it also allowed its rivals, particularly China and South Korea, to try to seize the moral high ground. In fact, when Japan threatened to cut off aid to China for testing nuclear weapons in 1994, Jiang dourly reminded then-Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama of "certain historical facts," then added: "It's no good that militaristic views still emerge from time to time in Japan." Xu said, "We were marched to the banks of the Yangtze, and they started shooting. I fell to the ground, but after they finished shooting they checked everybody to see if anyone was still alive." Stabbed with a bayonet, and with a bullet lodged in his jaw, Xu somehow survived and escaped.

The Japanese reluctance to apologize, to acknowledge its war crimes or to conduct any national self-examination, has only recently begun to yield, but only a little. Just this year a revisionist movie celebrating Gen. Hideki Tojo, the wartime commander of the Japanese Imperial Army and a convicted war criminal, became a runaway success in Japan. At the same time, cinemas showing a small Chinese-produced movie about the

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

# Germany clashes with US on first use of nuclear weapons

By William Drozdiak

BERLIN—Germany's new left-wing government is facing its first serious clash with the United States by proposing that NATO break one of its central strategic doctrines and pledge that it will never be the first to use nuclear weapons, it was reported in the LA Times-Washington Post News Service.

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's coalition government plans to press its case for the change at a key meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels on the 8 and 9 December. Germany will argue that a new overall strategic doctrine being prepared for NATO, to be unveiled at the alliance's 50th anniversary summit conference in Washington next April, should rule out use of nuclear weapons before any foe to prove that Western powers are serious about moving toward nuclear disarmament, according to senior German officials.

The initiative has shocked and angered the Clinton administration, which recently was assured that the new German government, made up of Schröder's Social Democrats and the environmentalist Greens, would maintain continuity in Bonn's foreign and security policies. US officials warned that such a dramatic shift in deterrence strategy—one that has kept the nuclear peace for more than 50 years—could gravely undermine faith in NATO's military commitments.

But German officials say fundamental changes in NATO's nuclear doctrine are long overdue. They argue that bold initiatives such as a no-first-use pledge are necessary to dissuade other nations from pursuing nuclear arms and to encourage threshold powers such as India and Pakistan to renounce any recourse to

weapons of mass destruction.

Officials say they expect debate over the proposal could dominate discussion at the upcoming NATO ministers meeting and lead to an acrimonious public debate among the allies. "I have signaled to NATO Secretary General Javier Solana that we want to talk about this, because we see things differently," German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer told the newsmagazine Spiegel. "We must discuss it openly in the alliance without creating the impression that Germany is going its own way now."

The no-first-use pledge was quickly enshrined in the governing program hammered out by the Social Democrats and the Greens after they ousted the conservative alliance led by then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl in the September national elections. Both parties have crusaded for nuclear disarmament in the past, but they downplayed the issue ahead of the vote.

Two weeks ago, Germany stunned the United States, Britain and France—NATO's three nuclear powers—by breaking ranks and abstaining on a motion on nuclear disarmament put forward by neutral countries at the United Nations. German officials acknowledged that endorsing the disarmament proposal would have triggered a major row with its leading allies, but they said the new government wanted to serve notice it was serious about campaigning to have NATO renounce first-use and to diminish the alert status of its nuclear weapons.

With many of NATO's governments now run by left-wing parties, the influence of political factions within the alliance that want to de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons has grown significantly. Canada, in particular, has declared its support for incorporating a no-first-use

ban into the new strategic concept that is supposed to chart the alliance's war-fighting doctrines for the 21st century.

Reserving the option of initiating a nuclear conflict has been a cornerstone of NATO's deterrence strategy for decades. Allied military commanders say that sustaining doubts in the mind of any adversary about NATO's willingness to escalate to the nuclear level is an important psychological tool. They claim its purpose remains critical in the post Cold War era, if only to preserve a strategic equilibrium, because Russia still keeps tens of thousands of nuclear weapons on alert status.

US officials said Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright has expressed serious concern in discussions with Fischer about the perils that Washington perceives in making any changes in NATO's nuclear doctrine.

"We believe the Germans are using flawed logic and phony arguments," a senior US policy-maker said. "If we adopted a no-first-use policy, it would not only harm our deterrence strategy but would encourage rather than dissuade other countries to go after nuclear weapons. It makes no sense."

He dismissed the German position as "misguided and even dangerous" while NATO is groping for a new sense of cohesion as it embraces members from former communist countries and pursues risky peacekeeping missions in the Balkans. "Anything that departs from the status quo on the alliance's nuclear doctrine could wind up feeding the aggressive tendencies we are trying to contain," the US official said.

## A cry for justice

# The case of Abu Jamal

By Mohammad Al Thaqer  
Special to The Star

WHILST SURFING the internet recently, I came across a very interesting judicial case in the United States. The convicted person, better known as Mommi Abu Jamal, has been accused of attempted murder and is currently on death row awaiting execution.

Abu Jamal is a well-known journalist in the US who was awarded several prizes from press syndicates for his reports and articles. Some of his articles focused on violations by American policemen in general, and the anti-semitic behavior of some members of the Philadelphia Police Department in particular. Abu Jamal, the father of three children, has often said that the aim of his reports is to reveal the true face of the American police.

Well-known for his political activities, Abu Jamal is considered to be one of the founders of the so-called "Black Leopard" movement in Philadelphia. The leader of the organization, who died on 15 November 1998, was the target of FBI investigations since the age of 16. Abu Jamal's affiliation with this man has created several problems for him. Early in 1981, Abu Jamal witnessed a shooting of a policeman. With time, the accusations have been altered from witnessing, to manipulating, to prompting the murder. Abu Jamal was then accused of murder in the first degree, and was sentenced to death three years ago.

The only reason why the



execution has been suspended is that the case has attracted a lot of media attention, and Abu Jamal has been inundated with letters of support from people in the US, and from abroad, asking for his release. His appeal rests with the High Court of Pennsylvania.

During his imprisonment, Abu Jamal has written many books, and has participated in numerous political chat-shows from his cell, live on national radio. The two books written during his incarceration are entitled "Live from Death Row" and "Death Blossoms,"

and the former has been translated into seven languages and published widely in the US. A third book, "Race for Justice," written by Abu Jamal's solicitors, is currently recording high sales. This book reveals all the details of the criminal trial, and was named as "the best political book" in 1996 by the American Booksellers Syndicate.

Abu Jamal has always kept himself busy, obtaining a honorary degree in Law from the Law Academy in Pennsylvania. He gained five thousand votes in a recent vote for the Vice Chairman of the National Lawyers Association in the United States. In 1996, the American TV network HBO transmitted a one-hour show about Abu Jamal's case, entitled "Under Logical Doubt." The program created a widespread reaction across the US and abroad, and led to many demonstrations in cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington DC, and New York. Amnesty International, South African President Nelson Mandela, former Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl, and the European Parliament have all voiced their concern regarding Abu Jamal's case, and they have called for a retrial. Abu Jamal's notoriety has led to two offers of honorary citizenship from Copenhagen, in Denmark, and Palermo in Italy. Whether Abu Jamal ever gets to see these two cities remains in doubt. Unfortunately, if no progress is made on the retrial, Abu Jamal will be executed at the end of this year.

# Queen announces Bill to Reform House of Lords

By Bill Glanzer

LONDON—A robbed, bejeweled and bespectacled Queen Elizabeth II dispassionately read out one of the more revolutionary governmental policies of her near half-century reign this Tuesday.

With one simple sentence, she confirmed the Labor government's commitment to sweep away centuries of tradition and radically alter the makeup of the House of Lords, the upper chamber of Parliament.

"A bill will be introduced to remove the rights of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords," the queen said.

The long-expected announcement, contained in the speech that marked Britain's State Opening of Parliament, was taken stoically by the red-robed, unselected lords, some of whom hold titles that go back to the Middle Ages.

Yet among some members of the elected House of Commons, who stood in the august upper chamber, there were muffled cries of "hear, hear," as Britain plunged into a constitutional battle that could drag on until 2000. There also were mutterings of "shame."

The State Opening of Parliament is the richest ceremonial occasion on the British calendar, a chance for the country's ruling elite to bring out their furs and family heirlooms in a show of pomp, circumstance and power.

With carriages, trumpets and processions, the ceremony is a far more ornate—and theatrical—version of the American State of the Union address.

This year's opening was advertised as scaled back, with the royal procession pared by 14 officials. Missing were such courtiers as the Gentleman Usher of the Sword of State and Silver Stick in Waiting.

Even the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, broke with tradition. After pulling the government's speech from his ceremonial purse and hand-delivering the legislative program to the queen, he turned his back on her as he walked down the carpeted steps.

In her 20-minute speech, prepared by members of Prime Minister Tony Blair's government, the queen mentioned 17 of 22 bills that will be introduced in the parliamentary session that runs until the summer.

It was a grab bag of reforms for education, welfare and unions, as the queen said the session would "focus upon the modernization of the country, its institutions, its public services and its economy." Blair's government also



The Queen leaves Buckingham Palace by carriage for the House of Commons to attend the State Opening of Parliament, 24 November.

Reuters

vowed to move ahead to give London a popularly elected mayor with a ruling assembly.

But the most controversial bill is the move to change the House of Lords, which maintains the power to amend and delay legislation by a year.

Wanting to eliminate one of the last vestiges of a rule by aristocracy, Blair's government seeks to blunt 759 hereditary peers, who gain their positions in the House of Lords by virtue of birth, leaving the chamber with roughly 600 life peers, who received governmental appointments to the chamber that are not passed on to their heirs. Blair's government proposed establishing a royal commission to "review further changes and speedily to bring forward proposals for reform"

of the Lords. Many believe that Britain is headed for an upper chamber with both appointed and elected members.

The House of Lords and the House of Commons became separate bodies in the 14th century. The last major attack on the House of Lords came in 1911 when it was stripped of most of its powers after defeating the government's budget.

Last week, the hereditary peers, who usually side with the Conservatives, showed they still have some fight left in them when they led the move to block the government's plan to transform the way Britain elects its representatives to the European Parliament.

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# A bargain in Bali

For a long time a center for indigenous religious painting, the village in the 1930s became a haven for Western artists such as Spies and Bonnet, who, together with the ruler of Ubud, Cokorda Gede Agung Sukawati, founded Pita Maha, a society for the advancement of Balinese art.

By Susan Spano

UBUD, Indonesia—"I am on Bali now," wrote the Dutch artist W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp, "and I like it very well—a delightful place—and also very cheap for me." The year was 1903.

In September, when I visited this Indonesian island paradise, it was very cheap for me, too. Bali has been a premier budget destination since Nieuwenkamp's day, but it's a steal in the wake of the Asian economic meltdown. International travelers aren't coming—partly out of wariness over Indonesia's tense political climate—and the rupiah is in free fall.

In September 1997, \$1 was worth 2,433 Indonesian rupiahs; this September, money-changers at Ngurah Rai International Airport, south of the Balinese capital of Denpasar, were giving 10,500 rupiahs to the dollar. How this translates for the tourist on Bali is that a fresh glass of pineapple juice costs 50 cents, a dress costs \$4, car rental for a day \$10, a hotel room on the beach \$35, a two-hour massage and milk bath \$8.

With political instability, rampant crime in Jakarta and riots on the big island of Java, travelers are wise to think twice before visiting Indonesia. The country has been shaky since the fall of longtime President Suharto. But even when violent anti-government demonstrations have racked Java recently, Bali has remained essentially peaceful.

Bali is an Indonesian anomaly: the one spot in the world's most populous Muslim nation that is overwhelmingly Hindu.

And vibrantly, pervasively so, with 1,000 lavishly sculpted temples, cremations that are joyous affairs, and sacred days all through the year. So beguilingly colorful is the island's religious life that the Dutch colonial government prohibited Christian missionaries from proselytizing in order to keep the culture intact. What is more, the 2.9 million Balinese are well educated by Indonesian standards and somewhat more affluent than their compatriots in this 17,000-island archipelago.

Tourists first started trickling into Bali in the late 1920s, when European artists such as Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet settled in the rice-belt town of Ubud and sent home images so tantalizing that the trickle soon became a stream. Consequently, Bali is no lost Eden; big new resorts are rising at the very threshold of revered temples, and hard-sell peddlers ply every street and beach.

But it is not too touristy for me because it's beautiful. Fifty miles long, 90 miles wide and situated eight degrees north of the equator, it's garlanded with oleander and bougainvillea and has a bumpy backbone of active volcanoes. Twenty percent of the land is given over to terraced rice paddies cascading over the flanks of mountains in emerald green. Sandy beaches edge the Bukit Peninsula in the southeast, and in the interior rivers such as the Wos and Cerk cut deeply into a tangle of banyan trees, coconut palms and lacy bamboo.

Before I left home I decided to travel without hotel reserva-

tions because you generally bag the best deals by showing up at reception desks and bargaining (a little dicey, perhaps). To be on the safe side, I booked accommodations for my first two nights at the nine-room Baruna Beach Inn (\$35, including breakfast), 20 steps from the ocean in Sanur. Originally it was built as a residence by the late President Sukarno.

Sanur is a beach enclave, about 30 minutes northeast of the airport by taxi (a \$5 ride), where society is a village tradition and where the Belgian artist Adrien Jean le Mayeur de Merpres settled in the 1930s with his wife, a Balinese dancer. Bounded on the north by the 11-story Bali Beach Hotel, the town is far more laid-back than busy Kuta, farther south, and modest in comparison with towny Nusa Dua, near the tip of the Bukit Peninsula. With its long waterfront sidewalk lined with open-air restaurants and neatly manicured, low-rise hotels, Sanur was a nice, quiet spot to recuperate from jet lag.

The next morning, I was awakened by a brief downpour that sounded lovely on the roof of my dark and slightly shabby room at the Baruna Beach Inn. The porch was much nicer, overlooking a garden with waxy blossoms dripping from trees and a ledge lined with Balinese sculpture.

The artistic Balinese handicraft everything from temple pavilions to gamelan drums, and seem to occupy the very landscape artfully. This yields photo opportunities wherever you look. But to see Bali at its

most beautiful, you've got to go to Ubud, about an hour's drive north of Sanur. Tourist buses and hot, crowded public mini-vans called "bemos" get you there incredibly cheaply, but I arranged for a private van, bargaining the driver down to \$5 from his original asking price of \$10.

For a long time a center for indigenous religious painting, the village in the 1930s became a haven for Western artists such as Spies and Bonnet, who, together with the ruler of Ubud, Cokorda Gede Agung Sukawati, founded Pita Maha, a society for the advancement of Balinese art. The school, now centered in the beautifully landscaped Puri Lukisan Museum, transformed traditional Balinese painting by teaching a new generation of local artists to include scenes from daily life in their work.

Located among river gorges and rice paddies, Ubud is a sprawling town that is surprisingly cosmopolitan for its size and rural setting. It has a busy schedule of dance and puppet shows (about \$1.50 per ticket) as well as shops, galleries, artists' studios and museums. Good places to eat abound.

I wanted to be in the center of Ubud, so I ended up at Pringga Juwita Cottages. Nine-teen rooms are scattered beside a winding, jungle water garden, and it has a pool. Breakfasts in the central pavilion were excellent, and my bungalow was lovely, especially the partly open-air bathroom, its sink set in a bed of tropical plants.

When I decided to stay an extra night so that I could



Tourists, picnickers and peddlers mingle with the bereaved at elaborate cremation ceremony for a prominent citizen of Ubud, Indonesia.

attend a cremation (the most important ceremony in Balinese religious life, with a procession accompanied by priests and musicians leading to the final lighting of the funeral pyre), I was sorry to find that my room had been reserved. The manager walked me across the street to Sama's Bungalows, quite affordable at \$7 a night but hardly as well kept as Pringga Juwita, and with no hot water.

The two dance performances I attended were magical, with gamelans sounding like mellifluous traffic jams in the dark, steamy Balinese night. At the cremation that Saturday, hours of preparation

and ceremony ended abruptly when three catafalques surmounted by huge paper bulls were set afire.

I had to decide where I was going for my last two nights in Bali. Lovina, in the north sounded too funky, and the Gunung Batur volcano too touristy. So it was a bit of good luck that I agreed to snap a picture of a couple from California, Paul and Kathy Terrell, while taking a walk north of Ubud one morning. They told me about a luxurious new hotel they'd found in the east coast hamlet of Ahmed, where the long skirt of Gunung Agung, Bali's mother mountain, drapes into the sea.

The Hotel Indra Udhayana, which opened last year, was as nice as the Amandari, they claimed, but a lot cheaper. Furthermore, the guest-starved management was cutting deals. The Terrells managed to book a two-story garden-view bungalow there for half the brochure rate of \$120. And they absolutely adored the split-level pool overlooking the sea.

Because the hotel has you virtually captive in an undeveloped part of the island, meal and activity prices are high. I paid \$25 for a morning of snorkeling with an extremely adept guide who took me first to the offshore wreck of a World War II US cargo ship,

and then to the reef just north of the hotel. There I did the best snorkeling of my life, as barracuda, squid, snapper and Oriental sweetlips swam by. I left for the airport the next morning, stopping to shop at the Sukawati craft market south of Ubud. During my stay on Bali, I spent \$60 for a whole bag of Balinese goodies, and another \$60 per day for accommodations, meals and entertainment. I could have done it even more cheaply, but there's no counting pennies in paradise. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

By Gary Lee

CARLOS CIANO laughed with his eyes when he recalled the times he spent running riot across San Blas, his father's timber plantation, an estate in northern Cuba that covered more acreage than Northwest Washington. Afternoons were devoted to hunting wild creatures with his buddies. Nights were a time for dark rum and Spanish ballads.

Suddenly somber, he then recounted the day Fidel Castro's revolutionaries claimed San Blas, an event that sent the Ciano clan into exile and brought Carlos's adolescent idyll to an abrupt finale. Carlos, a 59-year-old grandfather, did not look like a man who had survived a revolution. He nonetheless had that youthful presence many islanders retain well past their prime. He wore a faded red shirt and blue jeans that had been washed so often they looked gray. As he talked, he clutched the wheel of his Soviet-made car, a beat-up 1982 Lada, and looked out at the dusty road leading past fields of swooping palm trees to our destination, the Bahia de Cochinos, the Bay of Pigs.

To be clear, the site of the aborted 1961 invasion where CIA-trained troops clashed with Cuban soldiers was not my idea of a dream vacation spot. But when Carlos, a friend of a friend, offered to give me a glimpse of the Cuban countryside, I jumped at the chance to see if there was more to the island than the grand boulevards and crumbling mansions of Havana.

A burning curiosity had brought me to Cuba. The State Department discourages Americans from traveling as tourists to the struggling communist country 90 miles off the Florida coast, and a 36-year-old trade embargo restricts US visitors from spending money there. In spite of that, Cuba has become the trendy traveler's destination of the moment. In the past five years, the number of tourists visiting Cuba from Italy, Germany and other foreign countries has doubled, to 1.7 million. Last year, an estimated 50,000 Americans visited surreptitiously to share the experience, mostly by flying in from Canada or other Caribbean islands. Some find the taboo of prohibition alluring; many others sense that a sea change is long overdue in Cuba, that Castro won't live forever, and that the opportunity to visit while the country is still caught in a vivid mid-century time warp is nearing an end.

My visit opened my eyes wide. During a late-night outing to the Palacio de Salsa, a flashy club in the Riviera hotel in Havana, I saw dancers moving with a grace more mesmerizing than Astaire's. At the Tropicana I heard singers who combined the boom of Leontyne Price with the happy-go-lucky spirit of Ella Fitzgerald. I gawked at the neoclassical villas along Havana's Calzada del Cerro. At simple eateries, I savored the tasty black bean soup, fried plantains and grilled fish that have made Cuban food famous the world over. After a week's stay in Havana and the provinces, I can safely report that the island's status as a fountainhead of West Indian art and culture is well deserved.

But after all that, it was not the artistic or culinary skills of Cubans that most captured my fancy. It was their life sagas. Looking back, I do not fully understand what inspired the locals I met to pour out their souls to a stranger from America. Perhaps the beloved mojito, a Cuban cocktail composed of rum, sugar, lime juice and mint leaves, is what sent their tongues wagging. Or maybe it was the starry nights along the Malecon—the promenade winding along Havana's shoreline—that encouraged them to speak freely about their lives.

For Esperanza Portuondo, a stout woman with a sonorous voice and cafe au lait skin, the pivotal moment came when

## Mystical Cuba attracts an ever increasing number of tourists

she returned from Moscow with a doctorate in nuclear physics to find that there was no market for atomic scientists in Cuba. In need of money, she decided to try her hand at entertainment. A few glowing gigs landed her on the stage of the Tropicana, where I heard her belt out a love song so touching that it almost brought the crowd to tears. Drawn to her voice, I followed her to the cozy club in the hotel Melia Cohiba, where she performs nightly. It was there, over a round of pineapple daiquiris, that she told her story.

For Roberto Barrieta, the turning point of his 31 years came when his wife, stricken with hepatitis, lay on her deathbed. Despair led Santiago to a park in Havana, where he communed with the deities of Santeria, the odd mixture of Catholicism and Yoruba religions that African-rooted Cubans practice with fervor. Within a day, he says, his wife was walking and on the road to recovery. Ever since, the industrious tour guide has given over his spiritual existence to Santeria.

Maria Gonzalez's life took a pivot point the night Fidel Castro showed up at the front door of her home in the city of Cienfuegos. In the early 1950s, Maria had opened Covadonga, a small restaurant with a reputation for the finest paella in all of Cuba. Years later, when Castro showed up for dinner shortly after the revolution, he ordered the paella but found it hardly edible. "Where's Maria?" he asked the waiter, only to find that she had gone into retirement. The Cuban leader headed to Maria's home, where he pleaded with her to come back to Covadonga. She agreed, and quickly restored the reputation of fine paella to the restaurant.

I would hear many other stories, too: A taxi driver who could quote Pushkin in the original Russian, a bartender who made 200 daiquiris a night, a prostitute who supported a family of four with her earnings.

Before long I realized that if Cubans led lives worthy of a Hemingway short story, it was not by coincidence. Whether it was the strange mix of Marxist politics and Caribbean breezes or constant economic hardship, something about the island seems to send its inhabitants down a road rarely taken by us more comfortable Americans.

If Havana were a man, I have no doubt that he, too, would have given me an earful about his life. Alone, the saga of the city's legendary transformation on 8 January 1959, would have taken a long evening of stiff mojitos to tell. That was when Fidel Castro finally ousted dictator Fulgencio Batista and eventually raised the flag of communism over the Cuban capital.

Before that day, Havana was known as a rum-soaked enclave of Caribbean hedonism, an urban gem with the flashiest street life this side of New York, a place where sassy women would walk the



Surrounded by vintage autos, the author, Gary Lee, gets into the spirit of Havana.

streets all night, and it seemed as if the rumba would never stop. The colonial legacy of the Spanish included not only the language but a certain flair for late-night revelry.

Since Castro's revolution, Havana has become an experiment in socialism. It is now a place where medical doctors earn the equivalent of \$10 a month. Batista's ballrooms are used for exhibitions extolling the glories of Karl Marx, and the

state assumed ownership of nearly all private property, from mansions to small corner stores. To stem the outflow of refugees, the Castro government barred all but a trickle of Cubans from leaving the country.

During our stay, my traveling companions (Tom Cohen, a college friend, his wife, Lisa Fuentes, and their four children, Ricardo, Michaela, Hanna Luisa, and Juan Carlos, who ranged from 21

years to 10 months) spent time in both Havanas.

Although decaying buildings sat on almost every street corner, we found the spirit of Old Havana easily accessible. The Nacional, where we stayed, is a classic hotel towering over the harbor. With decorative ceramic and gaily painted wooden panels throughout the lobby, peacocks wandering around the courtyard and waiters rushing around with daiquiris, the 1930 building has a distinctly Caribbean flavor.

El Aljibe, where we dined our first night, served up a worthy feast: chicken roasted in garlic, black beans cooked in rice water, succulent avocados—all of it accompanied by enough mojitos to take us to the other end of the island without leaving our seats.

The Tropicana, where we packed a table one Saturday night, gave us one of the most inspiring evenings of music and dance we had experienced in years. A famed nightclub since the 1930s, it features some of the island's top talent. Singers let their romantic lyrics roll across the crowd. Dancers did everything from rumba to salsa and Afro jazz. Costumes were a glittery array of red and orange, highlighted by plumage stacked toward the sky. If any place was reminiscent of Havana's pre-revolutionary party spirit, this was it. The brightly colored classic American cars that crawl around Havana, from lemon-yellow Oldsmobiles to hot-pink Cadillacs, further enhance the city's antiquated ambience.

But there is a dark side to Havana. Even in the poshest districts it was hard to escape the atmosphere of destitution that hangs over the place. Panhandlers are everywhere, begging for dollars needed to buy food and other basics. Prostitutes roamed the streets, hotel lobbies and clubs. Elegant buildings were sagging near ruin, crowded with four or more families to an apartment. Faces were gloomy, reminiscent of the look Soviet people wore shortly before the fall of communism.

Particularly since 1991, when Soviet economic aid ran dry and Cuba was forced to pay its own way, the Castro government has worked at attracting more visitors with hard currency by sprucing up several moribund tourist attractions. Besides the Nacional, other hotels have been renovated and reopened, including the Santa Isabel, an elegant historic place in Old Havana. A few beloved restaurants have been restored, too. One favorite is La Vista, which sits on a plant-covered courtyard and serves blackened sea bass so fresh it tastes as if it had just been yanked from the ocean and tossed on the grill.

For nothing gave me a better feel for Havana's past grandeur than strolling through the city's streets. Calle Obispo, one of the main arteries in La Habana Vieja, the city's historic quarter, was my

starting point. This was Ernest Hemingway's stomping ground. El Floridita, the lively bar and restaurant where he drank daiquiris (said to have been invented here), is at one end. The Ambos Mundos, the hotel where he lived for several years in the 1940s (and where the rooms he used for writing most of "For Whom the Bell Tolls" has been turned into a small museum), sits at the other. There are other buildings that recall past times, too, including the Casa de Infusiones, an old-fashioned pharmacy, and El Anon, an old-style ice cream parlor.

Wandering around Old Havana could easily take a half-day. The Plaza de la Catedral is the centerpiece. At one end is the commanding 18th-century Cathedral de San Cristobal de La Habana. On the other side is the Casa del Marques de Arco, a historic mansion that now houses a graphic arts workshop. On another is former Palacio de los Condes de Bona, which contains the Museo de Arte Colonial. Probably the most significant colonial architecture in all of the Caribbean, the square only begins to give a taste of the exalted role that Havana played in the growth of the region.

For a foray into the Havana that Castro built, there is probably no better starting point than the Museum of the Revolution, housed in the old presidential palace. It provides a good sense of the revolution from the viewpoint of the party faithful: Here were papers documenting the lavish lifestyle and brutal tactics of Batista and his compatriots, coupled with reports of the reforms Castro's comrades undertook in the early years, including literacy campaigns and projects to enhance the infrastructure of the island's more impoverished parts. The highlight was probably the Granma, the yacht that Castro took from Mexico in 1956 to begin his guerrilla campaign.

Although one-sided, the exhibits gave a different perspective from most of the accounts of the revolution I had read in the United States, which accent the Cuban government's violations of human rights, including the imprisonment of political dissidents and harsh treatment of citizens who seek to escape.

To gain a better feel for workaholic Havana, I moved from the Hotel Nacional to a bed-and-breakfast in a quiet Vedado neighborhood near the historic Cementerio Cristobal Colon, where many of the island's best-known political and cultural figures are buried. Living in a \$25-a-day room and eating \$5 lunches of black beans and roast pork at paladares, the makeshift restaurants Cubans operate out of their homes, helped me to share in the simple lives most locals lead.

Here I found a refuge from the mood of poverty in other parts of Havana. Most of the neighbors I met appeared to be coping quietly with the limited resources at hand. "Not very many of us are rich, and some are pretty poor," said one office administrator I met in a cafe, "but most of us are just making do."

A long late-night dinner conversation with Pablo Armando Fernandez, a noted poet who unabashedly supports Castro, gave me further insight into the thinking of the country's true believers. I asked whether the blows that had been struck to Cuba's economy in the past four decades were worth the advantages the revolution had brought.

"This was a brutally racist country before the revolution, not unlike Alabama before the civil rights movement," he said. "Although there are many things that the government has not done, it has brought about a far greater sense of racial equality, particularly in education. That is something I am proud of." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



## Hype or revolution?

## Alternative medicine spurs debate

By Thomas Maier

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE'S growing popularity can be found in the little signs, says Dr. Samuel Benjamin, such as those pediatricians who now suggest herbal medicine for the common cold.

"I see a lot of kids whose doctors are recommending a herb called echinacea to fight off colds," says Benjamin, who runs the Center for Complementary and Alternative Medical Center in Stony Brook, N.Y. It's "a quiet revolution," he adds, that is overtaking the traditionalists patient-by-patient.

But "quiet" is not the term favored by Dr. Jerome Kassirer, editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, and a strong critic of untested alternative therapies. He uses the word "hype."

"Many people want to take their own medical care into their hands, and that's a good thing when done right," Kassirer said in an interview last week. "But we're dealing with an enormous amount of untested material, and the hype is excessive."

The two views stand at the center of a huge and growing debate over traditional vs. alternative medicine, a debate that has in just the past several months spilled with terrible sincerity onto the pages of the two most prestigious medical journals on earth. The controversy also has prompted the creation of a new journal, *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, which bills itself as the only peer-reviewed journal in a field that last year prompted \$21.2 billion in spending in the United States, much of which was not reimbursed by insurance.

Benjamin says patients and traditional doctors are increasingly relying on this array of New Age and ancient non-Western approaches in a way that is redefining patient care in America.

A new study, published last week in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, bears out Benjamin's contention with some surprising results.

Those findings also have helped to fuel a broader national debate over what standards should apply to alternative medicine and whether government should more closely regulate these therapies.

The new study says four of every 10 Americans used some form of alternative medicine last year, with almost 50 percent more visits than in 1990. In fact, the study showed that Americans made more visits last year to alternative medicine practitioners (629 million) than to their primary-care physicians (386 million).

"The market for alternative medicine is vast and growing," concludes Dr. David M. Eisenberg of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, "who oversaw the study."

Alternative medicine, and complementary therapies include relaxation techniques, herbal medicine, massage, chiropractic, spiritual heal-



A herb pharmacy in China

ing by others, megavitamins, imagery, homeopathy, hypnosis, biofeedback, acupuncture and other techniques, the study said. It's defined as any therapy not commonly taught in medical school or widely available in hospitals.

The most common ailments for these therapies, it said, were chronic conditions such as back and neck problems, stress, arthritis and headaches.

Traditional doctors, who are already surprised by the surge of recent consumer interest in alternative medicine, especially as the baby boomers age, are expressing concern that patients are relying on numerous alternative therapies that have no proof of working.

In September, an editorial by Kassirer, co-written with the *New England Journal's* executive editor, Dr. Marcia Angell, outlined their worries that alternative medicine has not been scientifically tested and that "its advocates largely deny the need for such testing," relying instead on "anecdotes and theories." Usually, articles in established medical journals including the *New England Journal*, which is perhaps the publication most widely read among physicians, are based on "double-blind" scientific studies, which measure the safety and effectiveness of new drugs or medical devices, by comparing results among those patients who use a new approach and those who do not.

The two editors fault federal regulators for failing to properly oversee the claims made by

alternative medicine and suggest that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration should be monitoring the safety and efficacy of these products.

But alternative medicine presents a perplexing political dilemma for those seeking greater oversight on its claims.

Dr. Yank Coble, a University of Florida professor and former chairman of the American Medical Association's committee that studied the issue last year, says he favors the FDA's making greater efforts to "ensure the claims are true" with alternative therapies. But he said Congress and other federal regulators are very unlikely to provoke the wrath of the alternative therapy devotees.

Coble adds that Americans have a longtime fondness for home remedies that may be too diverse and widespread for any government agency to regulate.

"My grandmother in North Carolina had all sorts of home remedies, like chewed-up tobacco for bee stings, and everyone knew their limitations," recalls Coble. "Now these products are being promoted and marketed in a terrific fashion, and the public has to be very cautious."

Kassirer's essay cited a new publication this year called *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, which specializes in publishing research about new alternative approaches. Its current issue features articles about acupuncture, "religiosity and absorption" and American Indian medicine, as well as ads for such products as vitamins, herbal supplements and alter-

native therapy programs.

In a response to *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Alternative Therapies Editor Larry Dossey complained that there is a "double standard" used by conventional medicine, which "creates more stringent demands" for alternative therapies than "those required from orthodox therapies."

In his own editorial in this month's issue, Dossey wrote: "If there is a dirty little secret in our profession, it is this: There is a paucity of scientific evidence for most things we doctors do, orthodox and alternative. We are fumbling in the dark and groping blindly much of the time." He said a 1978 study by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment found that "only an estimated 10 to 20 percent of the techniques that physicians use were empirically proven."

Among those "unproven but widely practiced orthodox therapies" cited by Dossey are "non-invasive electrical stimulation for unmet bone fractures," episiotomy and radial keratotomy.

Dossey said the standard of "double-blind" studies that test therapies, drugs and medical products in conventional medicine is also being applied to alternative therapies. (Last week's issue of *JAMA* devoted to alternative medicine highlighted a study showing that Chinese herbal medicine can reduce symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, based on testing done in the conventional manner. Other studies in that *JAMA* issue debunked claims by alternative therapies, such as finding that spinal manipulation appears unhelpful with tension headaches.)

Elizabeth A.M. Barrett, a nursing professor at Hunter College in New York and coordinator of that school's Center for Nursing Research, says the growing interest in alternative medicine underlies the public's disappointment in conventional medicine, which she says doesn't give enough credence to a "mind-body connection" in health.

In her own practice based in Manhattan, Barrett says she uses imagery to help patients with such common health problems as asthma. Although there have been no long-term studies on such practices, Barrett says she believes her patients are aided by such an approach.

"People with asthma will use images to invoke the idea of their lungs expanding fully, taking in more air, and reducing their wheezing," says Barrett, who is also a psychotherapist. But Kassirer says he's concerned this reliance on belief, rather than established scientific efficacy, is spreading greatly among the public.

"There's an anti-science feeling abroad, that science is just another 'belief' system, putting mystical approach on science," Kassirer says.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Yoga

## The art of meditation



By Ehsan Nimri  
Special The Star

SINCE THE appearance of Buddhism in the 5th century BC, Yoga became the basic ritual practiced by Buddhist monks around the world. At the same time, it was considered to be one of the ancient systems of aerobics. Before two and a half millennia, however, Yoga exceeded the aura of religion to become a sport practiced by everyone, young and old.

Yoga is a means of attaining perfect health by maintaining harmony and balance through a complete self-control of one's physical, mental, and emotional status. It is considered to be a natural therapy of physical and spiritual healing.

Regular practice of yoga leads to an excellent circulation of energy, stimulation of inactive glands of the body, prevention and curing many common daily ailments, such as tension, depression, anxiety, and stress.

Yoga has succeeded as an alternative form of therapy in diseases such as asthma, blood pressure, constipation and gastric troubles, headaches, digestive disorders and in strengthening abdominal muscles, respiration process and nervous weakness.

According to medical scientists Yoga therapy is a practical sport, since it creates a balance in the nervous and endocrine systems, which directly influences all the other systems and organs of the body.

By practicing Yoga, one can avoid the excessive use of

chemical medicines and overcome the complexities of daily routine.

Concentration and meditation are deeply involved in each practice and pose of yoga exercises. Nevertheless, useful exercises are not possible without immense concentration.

The individual must reach a meditative state where breathing becomes rhythmic and regular. This would give one the optimum result requested; a feeling of rejuvenation, strength, and energy filling one's body and mind after the practice. Furthermore, there are no side effects if you practice for a long period of time and stop suddenly. While practicing, there will be no loss of energy.

Yoga teaches you how to concentrate better on any subject in order to get a clearer understanding and perception of the subject of interest.

Yoga has transformed the life of millions of people all over the world. A disabled person can perform various Yoga postures which have therapeutic values and effects. One of the exciting examples is the Queen mother of Belgium, who made her first attempt at Yoga by standing on her head at the age of 83!

The main aim or principle of yoga is to burn the impurities of desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and envy. As a result, the mind becomes purged, and the energy which is latent within is awakened by the grace of God. Human energy remains initialized, unless Yoga practice becomes part of our daily life.

## New therapy for heart patients

By Thomas H. Maugh

GENE THERAPY for the heart can stimulate the growth of new blood vessels that bypass clogged arteries and provide increased blood flow to the organ, two groups of researchers reported last week.

The two teams have treated about 30 people with the technique, and most patients have reported decreased chest pain and improved quality of life following the therapy, the researchers said at an American Heart Association meeting in Dallas.

The studies are a follow-up to reports last year that the technique could be used to provide improved circulation in legs with arteries blocked by clots.

Experts cautioned that it could be several years before the therapy is used routinely but speculated that it could eventually help many of the 1 million Americans who undergo bypass surgery each year. About half of those surgeries fail within a year when the new arteries also become clogged.

The two teams took different routes to their treatments. Dr. Jeffrey Iner and his colleagues at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in Boston made a small slit in the chest to access the blocked vessels and injected the gene for a protein called vascular endothelial

growth factor, or VEGF, which stimulates the production of new blood vessels.

Iner's team injected the genes into 16 heart attack victims who suffered severe chest pain but were too sick for bypass surgery. Of the 11 patients who have been followed for at least three months, six are entirely free of pain, he said.

Dr. Ronald Crystal and his colleagues at Cornell Medical School in New York City used a modified cold virus to carry the VEGF gene into 14 patients. They have concluded that the treatment is safe but have not yet shown that it increases blood flow.

A variety of other reports were presented at the Dallas meeting, including one suggesting that the upcoming holiday season is particularly hazardous for people at risk of heart problems.

Dr. Robert Kloner of Good Samaritan Hospital reviewed 220,000 deaths in Los Angeles from 1985 to 1996 and found that the risk of death from heart disease is 33 percent higher in winter than in summer.

The risk begins to increase around Thanksgiving, reaches its peak at New Year's and then gradually tapers off, with January being the worst month overall. Previous studies in other parts of the country suggested that this increase might

be caused by cold winter weather, but Kloner said that similar findings in Los Angeles suggest deaths are linked more to the stresses and overindulgences of the holidays.

Mornings typically present the highest risk of a heart attack, with Monday morning being the worst. Previously, researchers associated that risk with the stress of going back to work.

But Dr. Michael K. Kruskal of Hahnemann Hospital in Vienna, Austria, reviewed more than 1,500 fatal heart attacks in that city and concluded the risk was highest on Monday morning even for those who are retired. The retirees' risk was 20 percent to 40 percent higher on Monday morning.

Although heart attacks at night are less common, they tend to be more serious, according to Dr. C. Michael Gibson of Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. He studied 1,246 heart attack cases and found that people who suffered their first heart attack at night were twice as likely to die or have a second heart attack while in the hospital.

To stave off such attacks, new studies suggest that people should consume more oats and nuts and, not surprisingly, should exercise more.

In a long-term study of female nurses headquartered at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, researchers found

that women who consumed more than five ounces of nuts per week had a 35 percent lower risk of coronary heart disease than women who ate less than one ounce. Men seemed to benefit in a similar fashion in a study of male doctors.

Researchers speculated that the benefits were produced by alpha-linolenic acid, which is present in high concentrations in nuts and has previously been linked to a reduced risk of heart disease.

A team from Harvard Medical School and Tufts University studied 43 men and women who consumed diets high in oats and compared them to people who ate a similar diet in which the oats were replaced with wheat.

Those who ate oats showed a decrease in cholesterol levels of 34 milligrams per deciliter, compared to a decrease of only 13 mg/dl among those who ate the wheat diet. The oat eaters also reduced their systolic blood pressure (the top number) by 7 millimeters of mercury, compared to only 2 mm/hg among the wheat eaters.

Exercise is particularly beneficial to people with congestive heart failure, according to a team from the Duke University Medical Center. The hearts of people with CHF do not pump as well as they should, and victims become breathless and tired easily.

Many doctors do not recommend exercise for fear that it will further damage heart muscle.

Dr. David Whellan and his colleagues studied 1,420 CHF patients for four years. They found that only eight percent of those who exercised died, compared to 36 percent of those who did not exercise. "That makes exercise as effective as the best drugs we can offer these patients," Whellan said.

One drug that is not used routinely to treat CHF patients can actually be very effective, according to a team from the

University of Maryland Medical Center. The drug is metoprolol, a beta-blocker that is generally not used because it initially makes the heart beat less effectively.

Dr. Steven S. Gottlieb reported, however, that if the drug is started at low doses that are increased slowly and carefully, it produces a 35 percent increase in survival. Their study of nearly 4,000 patients was stopped three years early because the drug was so effective.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Many fitness fans turning spare rooms into home gyms

By Connie Koenenn

LOS ANGELES—Kelly Brown belonged to a gym and liked working out but was so involved in the family marketing business that it was a hassle to get there. And her husband, whose doctor had recommended cardiovascular workouts, didn't want to take the time. There seemed but one solution: Bring the gym home.

So eight years ago she bought a Star Trek 2000 treadmill with all the extras: heart monitor, calorie meter and wheels for movability. The cost: about \$4,000.

"Back then, that seemed really expensive, but we wanted the top of the line," said Brown, who put it on the patio of their Malibu home for an ocean view during workouts. It was also a luxury item at the time, she recalls, but no more. "Now everybody seems to have treadmills—even my mother has a mini one in her apartment, which she puts under the bed," Brown said.

Indeed, fitness buffs are converting spare bedrooms, patios, garages and large closets to home gyms at such a pace that we can surely expect some sort of "fitness niche" in the homes of the future. (A spokesman for the National Association of Home Builders says that home gym space is starting to appear in upscale houses of 3,000 square feet and more.)

Like Brown, many people are discovering the convenience of exercising at home. "I get in 45 minutes at least three times a week," Brown said.

"I'm just more alert and energetic, even when I'm mowdown."

Americans in 1997 spent an estimated \$5 billion on home-exercise equipment, according to the Fitness Products Council, a trade group.

And while many stationary bikes and rowing machines still wind up in the garage sale pile, that is the exception rather than the rule. Council figures show that 32.3 million American households use exercise equipment regularly. (An additional 17.6 million homes, they calculate, have exercise equipment that isn't used regularly.)

In part, the trend is driven by 76 million baby boomers who are at or approaching middle age, and who are most anxious to postpone the physical decline of old age. "They've watched what happened to their parents, and they don't want to get to their 70s or 80s and have osteoporosis and heart attacks," one health club trainer said.

But baby boomers aren't the total picture. Their parents are trading leisurely walks for stationary bikes and modest weightlifting exercise, prodded into action by increasing evidence that exercise pays off, even for people who start as late as their 80s or 90s.

"The body is remarkably forgiving," said psychologist Robert L. Kahn, co-author of "Successful Aging" (Pantheon, 1998), a ground breaking study documenting the importance of lifestyle choices on later life. "It is never too late to start exercising." As a result, the marketplace is diverse.

"We don't have a typical cus-

tomers," said Marshall Granan, assistant manager of a Los Angeles-area Sport Chaiet store. "I get everything from men or women who've just had a heart attack to people in their mid-20s who work out three hours a day."

And while a piece of exercise equipment is not essential for a healthy workout, it offers the overriding benefit of being designed specifically for its activity. Home fitness manufacturers are designing trim versions of the hefty treadmills and stair climbers, once limited to gymnasiums and health clubs.

The psychological high of a good aerobic workout can be addictive enough to demand a daily fix.

"You definitely do get hooked on it," said Gregg Hartley, director of the Fitness Products Council. "Our studies show that 56 percent of people with health club memberships also have home equipment."

Members ask me all the time where they can buy the kind of treadmills we have here," said Linda De Le Torre, director of Meridian Courtyard Club in Los Angeles. "They want to fill in the workout gaps at home." Today's home shopper can find machines for walking, running, rowing, stair-climbing or cross-country skiing. The newest trend, an elliptical cross-training machine, combines all those functions.

But even as fads come and go, the backbone of the home gym industry remains the treadmill, according to the Fit-

ness Products Council, which reports that consumers spent about \$1.5 billion for treadmills in 1997—more than for any other major piece of equipment.

Treadmills are a good choice, say health experts. Not only are they easy to use for anyone who can walk or run, they offer a high rate of return in health benefits. A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* cited the treadmill as the optimal indoor exercise machine for burning calories and boosting heart rate. And treadmills come with nearly as many options for style and price as a new car.

Experts suggest that consumers do their homework before buying a major piece of fitness equipment and avoid an impulse purchase.

You can try out the machine at the store to get a feel for the equipment and its noise level. You can even wear your sweat-soaked clothes.

Other experts advise buying equipment from a reputable dealer who offers a warranty, as well as installation and maintenance. Unpack your machine carefully, and keep the packing material in case you have to return it.

De Le Torre suggests spending a few sessions at a gym trying out the equipment before deciding what you want to bring home.

"The biggest mistake people make is getting a piece of equipment home and discovering it is not as much fun as it looked."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Pavel Zaplatin, 62, smiles as he swims in an iced over river 22 November. Ice-swimmers, known as "walrus", insist that their extravagant hobby helps to build up resistance to many illnesses crucial for surviving the long winter. Reuters





## Young artists at the Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan

A DRAWING competition organized by the Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan took place last week. Three Jordanian schools took part in the competition, which had an environmental theme. Children between the ages of 6 to 10 years were asked to translate their vision of the World's environmental situation in the year 2000. The three schools participating were Amman National School, Modern Montessori School and Al Manhal School.

The judging committee included three teachers and three students from the schools, plus a representative from Jordan Environment Society in addition to three members of the Executive Committee at the Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan. It was

a very difficult task for the judging committee to choose the winning drawings.

First prize went to Marina Jouri from the Amman National School, the second prize went to Farah Yaish from the Amman National School, the third went to Kader Jalal Kardan from the Modern Montessori School and the fourth went to Dina Ghassan Dodah from Al Manhal School.

The winning drawing will be used to create a seasonal greeting card for Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan. The object of this competition is to raise awareness among young members of the community on the importance of protecting our environment.



## OFF THE WALL

### True friends

By Rana Al Haddad  
Special to The Star

SINCE TIME began, we humans have always desired true friendship. Friends play a major role in our lives, and we all know the benefits that accrue from having real friends.

But what is it that attracts people to each other? What is true friendship, and can it exist between members of the opposite sex in our society? These were just some of the questions that I posed to my friends recently, in a bid to understand real friendship.

Most of my friends believe that it is vital that any group of friends should be made up of both males and females, preferably in equal proportion. One of my male friends told me that he values the friendships he has made with the members of his ship: women can be just as good friends as men can, but the crucial ingredient must be honesty and faithfulness," he added. "I have a lot of female friends, and I am very proud of the fact, as I am able to discuss and share my thoughts on certain subjects with them, which are taboo with my male friends."

Meanwhile, a girlfriend of mine was happy to discuss this issue. She told me that she has many male friends, and again, it was the insight into a different perspective on life that was deemed so important. Friends of the opposite sex can help you to solve many of life's mysteries.

However, this viewpoint is not shared by all. One man told me that he was adamant about separating friendships between males and females. He said that he would feel uncomfortable talking to a woman about certain issues, and that he would be unable to express his feelings properly. He said that males often have different interests to women, and that consequently they have a different outlook on life. In addition, some subjects should not be brought up in the presence of women.

Another lady told me to listen to Majeda Al Rumi's song called 'Kin Sadeqi' (Be My Friend), as she thinks the song expresses how women feel in general about relationships with the opposite sex. The Arab woman in the song is asking the man to be her friend, since she is tired of the all too common 'love theme' in today's songs. What she needs right now is a friend, but he refuses the role, preferring instead the role of the masculine hero.

I think that the song best sums up my feelings towards friendships. The woman in Majeda Al Rumi's song is right to ask for friendship, and if the man is unwilling to reciprocate, she should rest assured in the knowledge that another friend is always just around the corner.

## Kamel Hussein depicts Iraqi life on canvas

By Kofi Attah  
Special to The Star

WERE EXECUTIVES once gathered, with expensive cars parked outside the thriving businesses in every major city in Iraq, there is now desolation. Iraqis have grown weary from the every day struggle to make ends meet under the UN embargo. Despite this pessimistic outlook, Iraqi artists are determined to carry on the fight to build a better tomorrow.

Kamel Hussein is one such artist, who has been highlighting the situation in Iraq through his latest exhibition entitled 'Points'. The exhibition reveals the horrors that the Iraqi people are being subjected to.

Hussein explores the pleasures of abstract and representational forms of expression, granting the viewer an insight into the more realistic elements of his work.

The tone of his work is shaped by a tortured mind and humiliated soul. His message and method of expression are both derived from his vast cultural background and the agonies of his country.

Incorporating images and symbols from different periods of history, both religious and temporary, he evokes the relationship between man and woman, through all stages of life. In his work entitled 'Adam and Eve', both figures are depicted in a sitting position with the sun and moon in the background.

The richness of the colors—yellows and browns are encapsulated together—show well his ability to narrate a reassuring story.

Most of the 20 pictures on display are mythological and have a strong oppressive streak. This is shown through the frequent use of headless women, with balls and apples in the background. A pertinent example of this is the picture of a seated man and a headless woman, that depicts mutual love between man and woman and the horrors of war at the same time.

"I have fought three wars, and the headless woman in my works are a symbol of the devastation of wars," Hussein informed The Star.

It is clear that the painter has a mission. The balls are supposed to depict the globe, the world and nature: this is where dreams and illusions flourish, especially in a country like Iraq which is now in turmoil.

Some of his paintings remind us of the negative sides of society:



Kamel Hussain

oppression, depression, injustice and all the social vices.

The woman's face that appears often in his works gives the viewer an insight into torture and consolation.

"I am searching for consolation after destruction," Hussein says.

The balls and apples reiterate his conviction that the harmonious relationship between man and his environment is still intact, despite the negative thoughts he nurtures about life. The slight optical illusion and frustration on his mind is neutralized by the constant appearance of the woman's face, that he describes as both metaphysical and surreal. But his paintings are much more than that since they seek to examine the inner depths of the metaphysical.

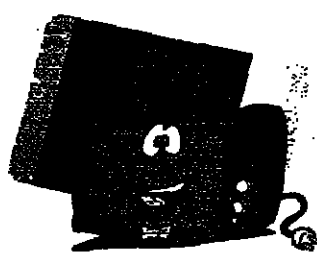
Hussein was born in Basra, in

1952 and studied at the College of Fine Arts at the University of Baghdad in 1977. He has held many exhibitions in Iraq, the first of which was held in Basra in 1975.

He now lives in Amman and works in his private studio, using his creative talent to unveil the elements of camouflage that men use in suppressing their fellow man. With his paints and canvas he warns of the dangers of war. Philosophical images are interwoven in a multi-colored background, bringing forth a freshness that many artists are unable to produce.

"Points" will run until 30 November at the Jordan Plastic Artists Association, situated in Jabal Al Weibdeh.

## ON THE BOX



### Aliens!

By Ibtihal Ahmad  
Special to The Star

EXTRATERRESTRIAL ACTIVITIES, aliens, intruders and the supernatural: all these elements are found in the X-Files, a TV show with a difference. Those who believe there is an intelligent life in the universe are sure to enjoy this program.

In most episodes we are presented with the concept of extraterrestrial activity around us. Sometimes, we are even tempted to believe that this is the case. The program is attracting a huge following in the US, because it confirms the doubts of those who believe that there is intelligent life in the universe, and that their civilization is much more advanced than what we have on earth.

The concept of aliens is fully explored by agent Mulder—one of the main actors—who knows for sure that aliens do exist. The setting for these space invaders is made up of the usual floodlights, and the stopping of time at the precise moment they land on earth. Viewers usually know when an alien or a paranormal activity is taking place. This is made all the more realistic by the brilliant, yet almost sinister theme music. The right music is always carefully chosen, and accompanies every scary event in the series.

The opening musical piece is especially captivating, as it has a relaxing and soothing effect, and prepares viewers for what is to follow. The episodes are full of surprises, not just because they talk about aliens. In this respect, the series is a daring and innovative challenge to the traditional views and beliefs held by today's society—also known as taboos. The program discusses many issues that question religious dogma and doctrine. Examples vary. One recent episode was about the transferring of people's souls by energy, created during the process of dying. It was about the power of the soul, and the ability of our souls to come back from the dead through certain means.

In the X-Files, and in many other American TV shows, whether it is documentary or science fiction, we see dying people go through a long dark tunnel with a light at the end of it. Depending on the person's deeds, they either end up in a beautiful and sunny garden, or in a dark place. These visions are mostly seen by patients who have had cardiac arrests, and they describe what has happened to them once they come out of their comas.

The two stars of the X-Files have opposing and different viewpoints. Mulder is a believer in the paranormal, supernatural and the inexplicable. Agent Scully, meanwhile, the medical doctor who decided to become an FBI agent, believes that everything can be explained by scientific theories.

The purpose of the conflict between the two characters is to pull the viewers back to reality. Scully's skepticism is supposed to have a desensitizing effect on the audience, and strengthen their doubts about the paranormal.

Because of her practical character Scully, prefers head on confrontation, unlike Mulder who is always, and paradoxically, afraid of the unknown.

## AGENDA

### Exhibition

■ Abstract paintings by the Jordanian artist Mohammed Abu Aziz are currently showing at the French Cultural Center. The exhibition will last until 28 November.

■ An exhibition of delightful photographs, entitled 'Windows and Doors', is currently showing at the Baladna Art Gallery, on Gardens Street. The photos, taken by the Jordanian artist Hani Hourani, will be on display until 18 December.

■ The 10th Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists, is currently showing at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Al Weibdeh, until 28 January 1999.

■ The French Cultural Centre will host a special exhibition of photographs depicting a journey from Morocco to Turkey. The exhibition, entitled 'Empreintes', will be opened to the public between 2 and 17 December.

■ An exhibition of 30 oil paintings by the Iraqi renowned artist Ali Najjar, will be opened at the Instituto Cervantes on 29 November. The exhibition will run until 14 December.

### Lecture

■ Darat Al Funun will host various meetings during the coming weeks. Today (Thursday 26 November), a special meeting and dialogue will be held with the Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan Kassar Bashi. The Algerian artist Rashid Koraishi will be next on the list on 3 December. Both meetings will be held at 5:30 pm.

■ An English lecture on the appreciation of classical music, entitled 'The German Language as a Musical Lyric' will be held at the National Music Conservatory, under the auspices of the Goethe Institute, at 6:00 pm.

### Concert

■ In celebration of George Gershwin's 100 birthday, the American Center, in cooperation with the National Music Conservatory, will host the Gershwin Duo "Crazy About George," in a special concert at the Marriott Hotel on 30 November. The duo comprises of John Ferguson (piano) and Kathryn Magestro (soprano). The concert will be held at 8:00 pm.

### Film

■ A French movie entitled 'Bob Le Flambeur', will be shown at the French Cultural Center on 30 November, twice at 6:30 and 8:30 pm.

■ The European Film Festival will open this week at the Royal Cultural Center. The festival will show various European movies between 2 and 18 December.

## Jordanian named first Radisson SAS Mideast 'Look to Book' elite member

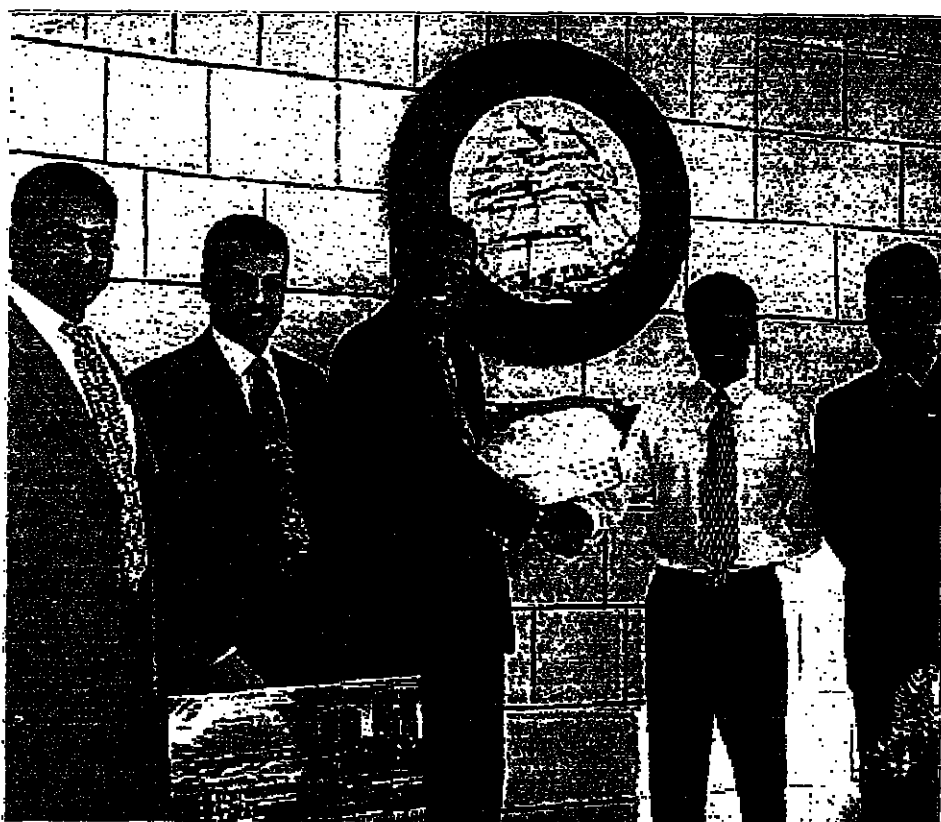
JORDANIAN TRAVEL agent Nassim Majdalawi has become the Middle East's first Radisson SAS 'Look to Book' Elite member.

To become an Elite member, Majdalawi, 25—owner of Amman's International Corporate Business Bureau—has registered over \$0,000 'Look to Book' points through the Radisson SAS CRS/GDS on-line travel agent incentive programme. Points are exchanged for travel and gift vouchers. "Majdalawi, the first of more than 200 regional travel agents to reach this mark, has generated over \$8,000 of business for Radisson SAS hotels in Amman, Aqaba, London, Moscow, Helsinki and Stockholm," said Theo Oaks, the Radisson SAS dedicated GDS systems trainer. "Look to Book" has distinguished the Radisson brand in the travel industry. "Its popularity has mushroomed since its launch 10 months ago because of on-line accessibility: travel agents don't have to bother with coupons or vouchers and they don't get hassle, just rewards," said Christian Fiedler, Regional Director Sales and Marketing Middle East, Radisson SAS Hotels Worldwide.

"Today there are 180,000 'Look to Book' members in over 90 countries and with five hotels in the Middle East—Amman, Aqaba, Dubai, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi—and with three more due on line in Egypt and Oman, we anticipate our next Middle Eastern Elite member any day now," added Fiedler.

'Look to Book' was developed to reward travel agents for their bookings by the Carlson Marketing Group, a sister division of Radisson in the Carlson Group of Companies of Minneapolis, USA. Carlson Marketing also developed British Airways' Club Select on-line incentive system.

Radisson SAS Hotels Worldwide currently operates 84 hotels and has another 18 under development, giving it a presence in 30 countries. Radisson SAS Hotels Worldwide is the sole franchisor in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa for Radisson Hotels Worldwide. Together with its parent company Carlson Hospitality Worldwide, Radisson SAS Hotels Worldwide has 538 hotel and resort locations representing 106,370 guest rooms in 31 countries, plus five luxury cruise ships sailing worldwide.





# The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV2  
from 28 November—4 December

## ENGLISH PROGRAMS

**SATURDAY**  
3:00—Holy Koran  
3:30—The Adventure of the  
Bush Patrol  
4:00—Neighbors (Drama)  
4:30—Peer Pressure (Doc.)  
5:00—French Program  
6:10—Wind at My Back  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Prog.  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Murphy Brown  
8:00—Today's Health  
8:30—The Fretender (Drama)  
9:15—ABC of Democracy  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—Film  
12:00—Twisted

**SUNDAY**  
3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Pink Panther (Cart.)  
3:20—Pumpkin Patch  
3:30—The Adventures of the  
Black Stallion  
4:00—Big Cat Diary (Doc.)  
4:30—Vid Kids  
5:00—The American Chart  
Show  
6:00—French Program  
7:00—Neighbors (Drama)  
7:15—French Program  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—The Brittas Empire  
8:00—French Program  
8:30—Walker Texas Ranger  
(Police Drama)  
9:05—Farming & Ecology  
9:30—Behind the Scene  
10:00—News in English  
10:30—Nothing lasts for ever  
(Mini-series)  
11:20—Doogle Howser

**MONDAY**  
3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Batman (Cartoon)  
3:30—David Copperfield  
(Children Drama)



Dr. Quinn, The Medicine Woman, on Thursday at 8:30 pm.

4:00—Neighbors (Drama)  
4:30—French Program  
6:10—Wind At My Back  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Program  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Paranthood  
8:00—The Internet Caffe  
8:30—Big Sky  
9:20—Encounter  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—F.X.—The Huston

**TUESDAY**  
3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—French Cartoon  
3:30—Bananas in Pyjamas  
(Children Drama)  
4:00—Life Choices (Doc.)

**WEDNESDAY**  
3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—The Adventures of

## Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 4634149): Mad Love
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 4634149): Kiss The Girls
- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): The Mask Of Zorro
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): Sacedi At The American University (Arabic)
- Plaza (Tel: 5699238): Sacedi At The American University (Arabic)
- Concord I (Tel: 5677420): Fear Is In The Air (Turbulence Ahead)
- Concord II (Tel: 5677420): Bodyguard

Teddy Ruxpin  
3:30—Halfway Across The  
Galaxy & Turn Left  
4:30—Masters Of The Maze  
5:00—French Program  
6:15—Wind At My Back  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Program  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—(2 Point 4 Children)  
8:00—Envoys Special  
8:50—N.Y.P.D.  
9:30—Great Moments Of  
Science & Technology  
9:40—Faces & Places  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—Chicago Hope  
11:15—The Album Show

**THURSDAY**  
3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Superman (Cartoon)  
3:30—Space Precinct (Sci-fi)  
4:20—The Science Show  
5:00—French Program  
6:25—Sparks  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Prog.  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Family Matters  
8:00—Museums of The  
World (Doc.)  
8:30—Dr Quinn—The  
Medicine Woman (Drama)  
9:10—Oprah Winfrey Show  
9:30—News at Ten  
10:30—Film  
12:00—Dudley (Comedy)

**FRIDAY**  
3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Moby Dick (Cart.)  
3:30—Treasure Hunt  
4:00—French Film  
6:25—The Simpsons  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Prog.  
7:30—News Headlines

7:35—Fresh Prince of Bel Air  
8:00—Cinema, Cinema  
8:30—Babylon 5  
9:10—Ancient-voices  
10:00—News at Ten  
10:30—The X Files (Drama)  
11:15—The Halifax

PROGRAMMES  
EN FRAN AIS

**SAMEDI**  
17:00—Faut pas rêver  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Magazine  
L'œuf de Colomb

**DIMANCHE**  
18:00—Bonne espérance  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—E-M6

**LUNDI**  
17:00—Thalassa  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Magazine scientifique

**MARDI**  
18:00—Les cœurs brûlés  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Fractales

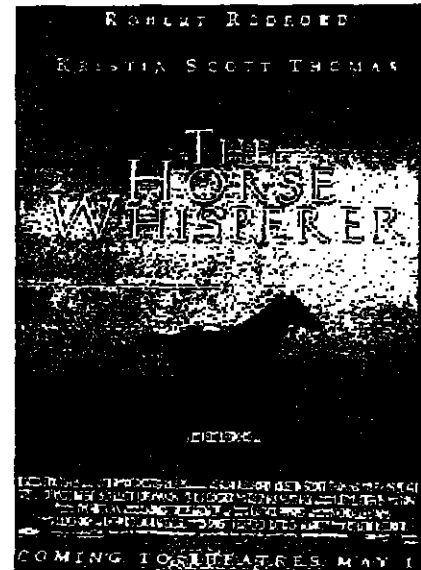
**MERCREDI**  
17:00—Ushazla  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—E-M6  
20:00—Envoyé spécial

**JEUDI**  
16:00—L'école des fans  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Magazine  
L'œuf de Colomb

**VENREDI**  
18:15—Fort Boyard  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Allô la Terre

Programs are subject to change by JTV

## Top Corner



## Top 10 Rentals

- Titanic
- Armageddon
- The Mask Of Zorro
- Horse Whisperer
- Snake Eyes
- Dangerous Beauty
- Sliding Doors
- There Is Something About Mary
- Blade
- The Mighty

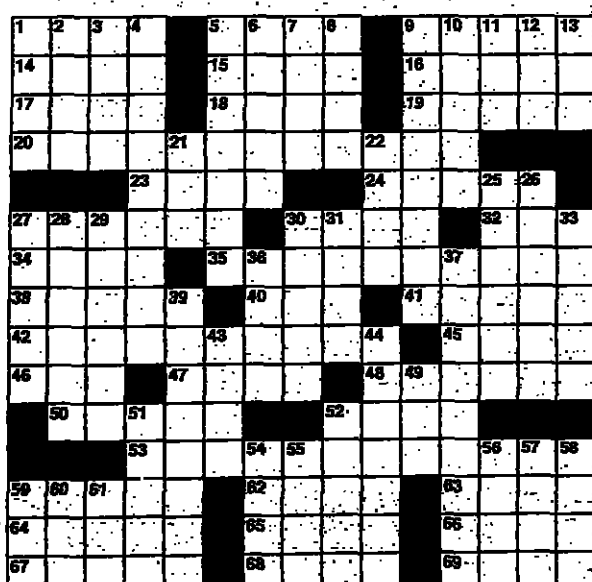
## Top 10 Original

- Titanic
- Austin Powers
- Kiss The Girls
- Amistad
- Desperate Measure
- The Full Monty
- Six Days-Seven Nights
- Seven Years In Tibet
- Jackal
- The Game

## VIDEO PLAZA

4th Circle opposite Belgium Embassy. Tel. 5930054  
Open daily from 12:00 — 9:30

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



**ACROSS**  
1 Follow's pop  
5 Rush  
9 Persian Gulf  
14 Unemployed  
15 Bitter expression  
16 Canonical hour  
17 City on the Nile  
18 Loss interest  
19 Like a pro-banano  
20 Everywhere  
21 Dingo  
22 Spaghetti sauce  
27 "A, bread"  
30 Arabian port  
32 Knock  
34 "The King"  
35 Everywhere  
38 Barbecue

**DOWN**  
1 "Kon"  
2 God of the Valley  
3 Porters  
4 Manta  
5 "More than one can show"  
6 Steal of the  
7 Dance or owl  
8 Give the cross-over  
9 Valled remark  
10 Heavy work  
11 Plus  
12 "I'm" go  
13 Scaly egg  
21 "Scoby" (cartoon)  
22 Ready for business  
25 Followed  
26 Trying time  
27 Captain's  
28 "Arna Christie" one

## THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

**Weekly Tip:** The sun is in Sagittarius, the sign of the philosopher. This should be excellent for stimulating conversations.

**Aries (March 21-April 19):** You're going to be really hot. Make big decisions, and take action. You're good with money.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20):** You need to figure out your budget; soon you'll have it down to the final penny. Do your shopping, though.

**Gemini (May 21-June 21):** Take care of old business. Bureaucrats are hard to deal with, but once you do what they want, your life will get a lot easier.

**Cancer (June 22-July 22):** Looks like a very busy time with complications arising. Heed an older person's advice and move quickly to stay out of his or her way.

**Leo (July 23-Aug. 22):** You're in an excellent frame of mind and just about everything you do turns out well. Consequently, you should keep yourself very busy.

**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** You've got financial matters to deal with. Be careful to be accurate, so you don't have a bigger mess later.

**Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23):** You're pushed to take action. Use your wits to keep from making a silly mistake. Count your money just to see how well you did on that deal.

**Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21):** You're in for a difficult time with an arrogant co-worker. Try not to blow up. Everyone will realize that you were right all along.

**Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** You should be hard at work, and you need to continue with that frame of mind. You'll soon find yourself in a very interesting situation.

**Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** Looks like a mess at home needs to be cleaned up first thing, but don't despair. Your luck gets better.

**Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** The moon in Aries will make you quick-witted. You'll find it easy to solve a problem that's been plaguing you.

**Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20):** Looks like a rather complicated time for you, with that sun in Sagittarius pushing you to make career changes.

**If You're Having a Birthday This Week:** A problem you've had for years will be resolved by a change in your attitude, as well as by learning new skills.

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## Bridge

Rubber Bridge vs. Duplicate  
By Omar Sharif and Tannah Hirsch

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

♠ A 10 7

♥ K J 5 2

♦ K 9 2

♣ Q 10 6

WEST

♠ Q 9

♥ 10 9 8

♦ J 10 8 4 3

♣ J 5 2

EAST

♠ J 8 5 4 3 2

♥ A Q 7 6 4 3

♦ Void

♣ 9

SOUTH

♠ K 6

♥ Void

♦ A Q 7 6 5

♣ A K 8 7 4 3

The bidding:

South West North East

1♣ Pass 2NT Pass

3♣ Pass 3NT Pass

4♣ Pass 5♣ Pass

6♣ Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Ten of ♣

Cover up the East-West cards and look only at the North-South holding. How would you play the hand in a duplicate pair event? Would you do any different at rubber bridge?

At duplicate, first consider whether the field will get to the slam. Since South has a strong two-suiter facing opening-bid strength in partner's hand, you can expect almost every pair to be in slam, and it is unlikely that more than one or two will venture six no

trump. Therefore, your task is to take the same number of tricks as the rest of the declarers.

Given normal breaks, you can score all 13 tricks. Even if diamonds are 4-1 you still make your small slam. So you ruff the opening lead, draw trumps and start on diamonds, either by leading low to the king or cashing a high honor from hand. With the suit breaking 5-0 you go down a trick, but you expect the rest of the field to do the same and you will get an average board.

At rubber bridge, the coin of the realm you lose for not making the small slam outweighs the consideration of an overtrick. You must protect against the possibility of a 5-0 diamond split, or four trumps with West.

Ruff the opening lead and play a high club. When both defenders follow, draw the remaining two trumps, ending in hand and lead a low diamond. If West follows, insert the nine. If it loses to East, you can claim the rest of the tricks. If West inserts an honor and East shows out when you win the king, return to hand with the king of spades and lead a low diamond to the nine, limiting your losers in the suit to one.

What if West shows out on the first diamond? Go up with the king of diamonds and return the nine. East must split the honors. You win, return to dummy with the ace of spades and lead another diamond. No matter what East does, the defender can get no more than one diamond trick. Try it.



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## Words of Wisdom

The use of a tool is more important than possession of it.

We lose love, not because of big mistakes, but because of small neglects.

If you don't value praise, you will never do anything praiseworthy.

Silence works best with gossip because it can't be repeated.

Holding the ladder at the bottom is a more valuable service than holding the ladder at the top.

Don't be a trouble hunter if you're not prepared to be a troubleshooter.



CELEBRATING HIS Majesty King Hussein's 63rd Birthday, the Jordanian Association for General Services and Manual Works held last week a special ceremony, honoring employees and producers working in the hotel sector. Two employees of the InterContinental Hotel were selected among those honored. They were Mr. Elias Abu Hawa, assistant manager of chefs, and Mr. Khader Shuwaiki, the lead tailor in housing management.

Minister of Labor, Mahdi Farhan, distributed awards and graduation certificates to all the selected personnel. Mr. Farhan said that honoring such people provides a considerable motive to others, and inspires them to keep on working honestly and devotedly. This he said would guarantee further success and prosperity to the profession.

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# Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

## La Bible à l'épreuve de Tell Hisban par Veronique Azu-Nijmeh

Avec l'Age du fer, la Transjordanie entre de plain-pied dans l'Histoire. Sa structure politique prend forme : la diversité régionale se traduit en trois petits royaumes : Ammon, Moab et Edom, qui entretiennent des relations économiques et politiques avec leur grands voisins. Pour la première fois, les traces recueillies ne sont plus uniquement archéologiques mais aussi littéraires, puisque les textes bibliques font de nombreuses références à cette région, en particulier lors de la marche des tribus israéliennes sorties d'Egypte. Dans qu'elle mesure, cependant, un texte religieux peut-il servir de source historique? La question est épineuse... En l'occurrence, les informations données par le livre des Nombres (ch. 20-21) ne résistent pas à l'épreuve archéologique. Incorrections et anachronismes sont innombrables. Entre autres exemples, citons Tell Hisban, mentionné comme Heshbôn dans la Bible. Aujourd'hui, ce modeste village au nord de Madaba, Hisban jouxte un tell couvert de ruines (voir photo). Son identification à Heshbôn est ancienne (dès le IV<sup>ème</sup> siècle ap. JC). Dans les textes, Heshbôn est décrite comme une cité puissante sur laquelle règne le roi Sihon qui refuse le droit de passage aux tribus. Celles-ci lui livrent bataille et l'écrasent, victoire plus prestigieuse pour les tribus si Sihon est redoutable. Or dans les fouilles de Tell Hisban relatives à cette époque (environ XII<sup>ème</sup> siècle av. JC), rien ne laisse supposer l'existence d'une telle cité. S'il y a eu occupation du site à cette époque, tout laisse à penser qu'elle fut très modeste... La même démonstration peut être répétée pour Jéricho. Au moment de l'entrée des tribus en Canaan, Jéricho était inoccupée, et il est donc impossible d'imaginer une destruction de la ville telle qu'elle est rapportée dans Josué (livre 6). Comment expliquer tant de contradictions entre l'archéologie et les textes? Ces derniers, rédigés au IX<sup>ème</sup> siècle av. JC, soit trois cents ans plus tard que les événements qu'ils relatent, décrivent les faits, non pas comme ils se sont produits, mais comme ils auraient pu se produire dans une situation contemporaine de leur rédaction. Les scribes de Salomon ont en effet pour cadre de référence la géographie du royaume que David a conquis par les armes. D'ailleurs les procédés employés par les tribus, tels qu'ils nous sont rapportés par la Bible sont plus ceux d'un peuple conquérant que ceux d'une population en exil...



### Éclaboussures

#### L'aventure médicale

Etes vous de ceux qui cherchent à faire bon usage de leur carte d'assurance maladie? Si oui, j'avoue vous envier, non pas pour les avantages financiers dont vous bénéficiez, mais pour la patience dont vous faites preuve. Donnez moi donc la recette qui vous permet de suivre, l'âme sereine, les méandres de l'administration de la santé!

Laissons de côté les centres de quartier, où la loi du moindre effort implique celle du moindre soin. Prenons plutôt la direction de l'hôpital universitaire, de préférence de bon matin. Emplissez vous de courage et surtout, oubliez le rendez-vous de travail que vous avez dans trois heures.

Première file d'attente : guichet de la section où vous avez rendez vous. Seconde file d'attente : guichet des paiements. Retour au premier guichet et troisième file d'attente (une autre!), mais avec les petits papiers que vous avez glanés, vous avez déjà avancé d'une case. Ensuite vous obtenez enfin le droit d'attendre votre tour de consultation: trois minutes ou trois heures, le hasard seul décide. Une fois l'entrevue médicale finie, cap sur la pharmacie de l'hôpital. La véritable aventure peut commencer. Si le médicament prescrit s'y trouve, vous pouvez d'ores et déjà penser qu'il est bon marché. Dans ce cas, la chance est avec vous. Vous devez juste attendre dans une première file d'attente pour qu'un employé parvienne à l'ordonnance, dans une seconde pour payer, dans une troisième pour la donner à un pharmacien, dans une quatrième pour recevoir les médicaments.

Si au contraire la pharmacie de l'hôpital ne possède pas les médicaments prescrits, deux options s'offrent à vous. Si vous êtes avisés, vous vous tournerez dans une pharmacie extérieure. Tant pis pour l'assurance maladie, elle a subventionné votre rendez vous, c'est déjà ça. Mais vous pouvez aussi poursuivre vos démarches dans l'hôpital et là l'aventure est un faible mot pour décrire ce qui vous arrive: c'est la galère. Vous devrez retourner voir le médecin qui devra venir à lui spécifier qu'il est impossible de remplacer le médicament. Vous devrez ensuite passer dans deux ou trois bureaux différents, obtenir la signature de X, l'accord de Y, la bénédiction de Z, puis départ pour le service de la recherche de la Direction de l'Assurance maladie. Cette intéressante excursion vous permettra d'imaginer ce que peut être une administration pré-informatique. Vous aurez droit à l'ouverture en bonne et due forme d'un dossier "hand-made" (on ne se moque pas du client!) car tout ce qui peut ressembler à un fichier informatique est inconnu au bataillon. Vous attendrez dans une première salle d'attente où l'on vous enverra dans une seconde puis dans une troisième... Mais attention! Vous devrez sans doute opérer un retour désespérant à la case départ puisque l'un des employés aura probablement oublié de remplir une case importante de votre dossier. Vous continuerez votre périple dans toutes les pièces que contient le bâtiment et à chaque étape, une secrétaire indifférente glissera votre dossier sous une pile de papiers. Mais ne perdez pas votre fil d'Ariane: vous êtes là pour trouver vos médicaments! Si vous êtes arrivés jusqu'ici, il vous reste à affronter la troisième phase de votre épopée. On vous informera de l'endroit où se trouve votre médicament. Feu vert pour partir à l'autre bout de la ville, à l'hôpital Al Bashir par exemple. Là bas, sauf accident ou défaillance de votre part, vous pourrez enfin, à la nuit tombante, mettre la main sur votre précieuse boîte de pilules. Si la maladie ne vous a pas terrassé avant, bien sûr...

V.A.N.

### Politique

## Une vitrine politique "on-line"

Longtemps, la presse a été seule à relayer l'image des partis politiques ou des mouvements militants. L'Internet est une façon pour ces groupes - clandestins ou non - de donner à un large public, sans passer par le filtre des médias, l'image qu'ils souhaitent donner de leur action. Comme les autres régions du monde, le Moyen Orient n'est pas en reste. Revue de sites.

Il est confortable de pouvoir s'adresser au public sans passer par le filtre des médias qui imprime toujours une déformation par rapport à l'image que l'on veut donner. C'est en partant de ce principe qu'est née l'idée de vitrine "on-line", chère à de nombreux partis ou mouvements politiques, non seulement dans le monde occidental mais aussi partout où l'Internet est disponible. Dans le domaine, le Proche et le Moyen Orient ne sont pas en reste, et nombreux sont les mouvements qui "mettent en

ligne" des informations les concernant, ainsi que des informations concernant leur adversaire ou leurs ennemis. Mais il semble que, si la Jordanie n'est pas à la traîne dans le développement et l'utilisation de l'Internet, son usage à des fins politiques reste, sinon nul du moins très discret.

Des mouvements dont l'image est associée à un certain archaïsme sont eux aussi présents sur le web. Ainsi le Hezbollah possède un site officiel (<http://www.hizbollah.org>) dans lequel il dispense des informations sur son action au sud Liban et annonce les conférences et les événements qu'il recommande ou soutient. Le site revendique environ 16000 connexions depuis sa création et est disponible en anglais et en arabe. Entre autres, des photos du bombardement de Cana exhibent des cadavres d'enfants et de vieillards. Avec un certain cynisme une petite vignette indique : «cliquez sur les photos pour les agrandir». Sur un fond bleu électrique se détache une carte du pays du cèdre avec, dans une couleur différente, la zone occupée par la milice supplétive d'Israël (ALS). En surimpression, une kalachnikov : les intentions sont claires. Une bonne illustration de l'affectation hasardeuse des adresses (voir encadré), est qu'il existe un site alternatif à celui-ci (<http://www.hezbollah.org>) qui se trouve être malgré son nom, indépendant et, en tout cas libre de toute tutelle du Hezbollah. Dans ce cas précis, le doublon admet sa "non officialité" et renvoie sur le site officiel. Mais les confusions peuvent être préjudiciables au Hezbollah puisque le site indépendant renvoie sur le site du Hamas et sur un site traitant de l'opposition islamique en Irak alors que le Parti de Dieu n'a jamais mis en avant de grandes affinités avec ces

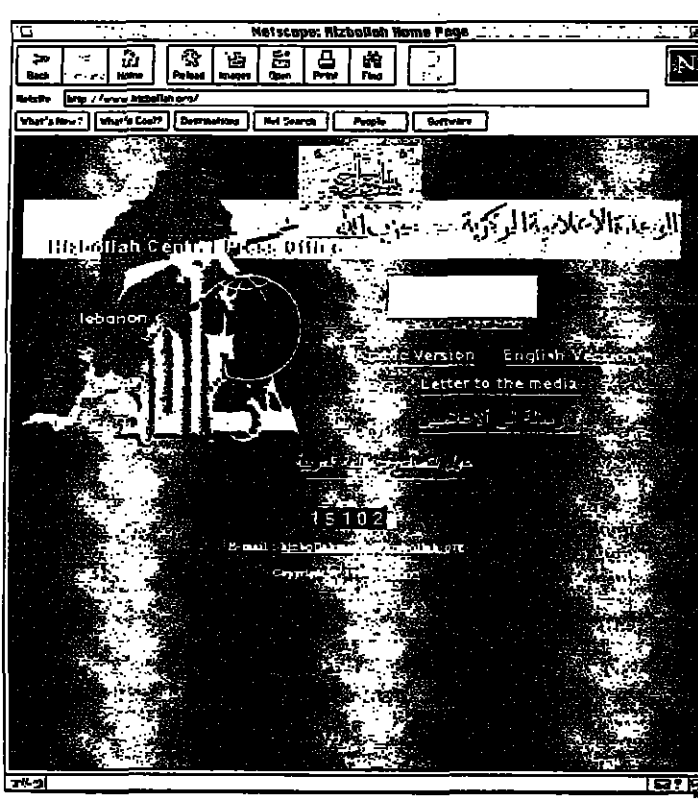
mouvements. Même topo pour le Hamas dont le site officiel (<http://www.hamas.org>) renvoie lui aussi sur le site officiel (<http://www.pna.org>), encore en construction, est quant à lui, beaucoup plus sobre et moins tapageur. Il ne renvoie à aucun des sites "universitaires" de la résistance palestinienne et ne propose que des liens vers les sites de ses différents ministères.

Plus à l'est, bien que ces considérations géographiques ne soient pas courues dans le monde virtuel, des mouvements comme ceux des Talibans ne sont pas en reste. Le site (<http://www.taliban.com>) qui leur est consacré affirme être la voix officielle du parti des mollahs, bien qu'il émerge par un serveur basé à New York. Son contenu est pour le moins surprenant. On trouve des informations sur

l'obtention des visas et des conseils pour les voyageurs, chose étrange pour un pays non encore totalement pacifié. Un "manifeste" taliban est également en ligne et justifie point par point la politique des nouveaux maîtres de l'Afghanistan. Le chapitre sur les droits de la femme n'est pas oublié : on y parle d'un pays dont les femmes ont retrouvé «la sécurité, la liberté et la dignité». Le passage sur la lutte contre «la lutte acharnée contre la consommation et la production de drogues illégales» n'est pas moins étonnant. Bien entendu la résistance de la vallée du Panjshir n'a pas laissé naître un tel projet sans lancer immédiatement par une contre-offensive virulente. L'agenda du commandant Karzai (<http://www.karzai.net>) est en construction et à pour but, à terme, d'informer les visiteurs sur l'avancée des combats, le tout en temps quasiment réel.

Moins à l'est, mais toujours du côté des guerilles de la région, un site de soutien aux combattants kurdes (<http://www.kurdistan.org>) proposé par la "American Kurdish Information Network" depuis de nombreuses années, met en ligne toutes sortes d'informations sur la situation des Kurdes en Irak, en Turquie et en Iran. Pour appuyer le propos, des photos de cadavres mutilés sont disponibles à la consommation. Au moins l'une d'entre elles a été retouchée, de sorte que la crédibilité du site est pour le moins douteuse.

L'Orient est donc en ce moment même le théâtre d'une première étape dans le processus d'utilisation politique de l'Internet. D'autres régions ont déjà franchi cette étape et certains mouvements lancent de véritables "attaques" dans le monde virtuel. Par exemple, les Zapatistes du Chiapas, au Mexique, ont effectué de nombreuses opérations de piratage informatique sur les sites gouvernementaux, diffusant fausses informations et photos de propagande sur les pages web de leurs opposants.



## L'adresse ne fait pas le moine

L'adresse d'un site auquel on se connecte n'indique en rien la provenance des informations qu'il contient. En effet, les noms des sites sont attribués au premier demandeur, sans qu'il soit tenu compte de l'identité de ce dernier. Un site peut donc très bien avoir une adresse comprenant le nom d'une organisation, se réclamer de cette organisation, et ne rien avoir avec elle. Ainsi, aux balbutiements de l'Internet, certaines personnes se sont lancées dans le fructueux négoce de la vente d'adresse Internet. En souscrivant un certain nombre d'adresses utilisant le nom des compagnies n'ayant pas encore de vitrine sur le Web (pour la modique somme de 100 dollars par an et par adresse), ces individus défendaient en quelque sorte l'avenir de ces compagnies dans le monde virtuel. La vente de ces

adresses a permis à certaines entreprises de se faire connaître et de développer leur activité en ligne. Cependant, cette pratique a soulevé des questions de crédibilité et de responsabilité. Les visiteurs ne peuvent pas toujours faire confiance à l'adresse d'un site, car elle ne reflète pas nécessairement le contenu ou les intentions de celui-ci.

Il est donc important pour les utilisateurs de l'Internet de faire preuve de prudence et de ne pas se laisser influencer par l'adresse d'un site. Il est préférable de vérifier la réputation et le contenu d'un site avant de lui accorder sa confiance.

### Société

## Le succès de la "convivialité électronique"

Ils sont partout. Ils prolifèrent de façon incontrôlée. Les Internet Cafés qui fleurissent dans la capitale connaissent, depuis deux ans environ, un succès que pourraient leur envier bien d'autres petits commerces.

### L'apparition

de l'Internet en Jordanie est très récente : à peine plus de quatre ans. Pourtant un nombre impressionnant d'"Internet Cafés" ont ouvert leurs portes dans la capitale - essentiellement à proximité des universités - et continuent de proliférer tranquillement, preuve d'un important engouement de la population jordanienne pour les nouvelles technologies de l'information. L'expansion de ces "cyber-café" est liée au fait que l'Internet n'est plus confiné dans les bureaux ou les institutions : il a, depuis son apparition, franchi les portes de la maison et se prête de plus en plus à des activités domestiques et d'ordre privé. Le premier d'entre eux a ouvert à Amman voilà trente deux mois, et le second n'a pas tardé, puisque deux mois à peine après l'ouverture de son rival il entrait également en activité. Mais les deux ou trois "pionniers" ont bien vite été confrontés à l'enthousiasme qu'ils suscitaient, et de nombreux autres lieux de "convivialité électronique" sont apparus. Le principe est simple : le client entre, s'assoit, commande une consommation, paye un droit d'accès à la demi-heure et peut ainsi "surfer" sur la Toile mondiale. L'une des premières motivations de la clientèle est le courrier électronique, ou E-mail (officiellement francisé en "mél") mis gratuitement à la disposition des usagers par des serveurs privés (hotmail, ya-



Froid, fonctionnel, informatique : le "cyber-café"

hoo, eudoramail, caramail, etc...). On peut ainsi correspondre sur de très longues distances sans les délais des services postaux, et sans les coûts du téléphone. Les "Internet cafés" sont donc a priori des centres de communication, et les clients n'exploitent en général qu'un seul des aspects de l'Internet. Celui-ci apparaît des lors moins comme une intarissable source d'informations que comme une alternative aux moyens usuels de communiquer. De même, la deuxième raison qui pousse les clients à franchir le pas des portes de ces "cyber-café" est le "chat", c'est à dire le dialogue en direct avec divers interlocuteurs. Certains sites proposent en effet des interfaces logicielles permettant aux différents utilis-

ateurs connectés en même temps de dialoguer par clavier interposé.

**Victimes de leur succès**

Cependant, parmi la clientèle étudiante, les scientifiques déclarent fréquenter les Internet Cafés pour effectuer des recherches concernant leur études. Il est en effet de plus en plus fréquent que les scientifiques "meurent en ligne" en extenso leur publications, sur les sites des institutions au sein desquelles ils travaillent.

Mais la plupart des propriétaires d'Internet cafés se disent en quelque sorte victimes de leur succès. Au tout début lorsque la concurrence n'était que peu développée, les prix

représentaient au moins le double de ce qu'ils sont aujourd'hui, loi du marché oblige. Il reste qu'au début de l'aventure, il y a environ deux ans et demi, attirer la clientèle n'était guère chose aisée : des affiches promotionnelles fleurissaient dans les brochures universitaires, sur les murs des amphithéâtres et dans les locaux des facultés. Rien n'était alors trop beau pour courtoiser le précieux - et à l'époque encore rare - internet jordanien. Des boissons chaudes étaient même offertes aux clients pour le prix du droit d'accès. Aujourd'hui, fût de tout cela! Les clients affluent et certains établissements envisagent même de supprimer tout simplement leur petite activité de restauration. Ainsi, le Internet Culture & Café, voulant désormais sa seule activité à la chose internet, devrait être rebaptisé en Internet Culture. Curieux raccourci sémantique qui associe la culture à l'Internet à la culture, car si l'on trouve le meilleur sur la Toile mondiale, certaines de ses mailles restent bien peu fréquentables...

Tatiana Qatami



### Culture

## Vers une perte d'identité ?

Le temps où les créations régionales, nationales ou locales étaient valorisées et les barrières géographiques qui limitaient autrefois les échanges et les interactions culturelles ont aujourd'hui sauté. Dans ces conditions, où les informations se transmettent de façon banale, en temps réel, quelle place est laissée à la survie des cultures locales? Le monde arabe en particulier, à un retard énorme par rapport à l'occident. Non que le patrimoine culturel et artistique des pays arabes soit pauvre; mais ils ne disposent pas de l'expertise nécessaire, ni des fonds, pour la mettre en ligne dans le cadre d'une mondialisa-

tion annoncée. Après la télévision, et les médias classiques, l'Internet est en quelque sorte la "pierre de touche" à un processus dont le monde arabe n'arrive pas à émerger. Lorsque deux Jordaniens communiquent par mél, par exemple, ou via une interface de "chat" (discussion en direct), ils ne peuvent, dans la très grande majorité des cas, utiliser leur alphabet et donc leur langue. Ainsi, l'Internet stigmatise un constat quelque peu inquiétant : celui d'un monde où la culture dominante ne s'impose que par son avance technologique et les moyens financiers dont elle dispose. Ainsi, plus de 80% des sites web sont en anglais, et bien peu en arabe. Dans la plu-

part de ces quelques cas, l'affichage des pages se fait en mode graphique, dont le chargement est beaucoup plus long que celui d'une page en mode texte. Un internaute arabe pressé ou impatient se tournera donc vers une langue qui n'est pas la sienne et en l'occurrence l'anglais. Que faire? Rester en marge d'un monde qui communique? Abandonner sa culture, sa langue sous prétexte qu'elles ne passent pas dans les réseaux? Il est temps pour le monde arabe de réagir et de mettre tout en oeuvre pour affirmer une présence originale et indispensable sur la Toile mondiale.

Icham Medarhi

Dès maintenant, vous pouvez vous abonner gratuitement à la liste de diffusion par Internet de notre collaborateur George Weibdeh et les critiques des films et de la culture. Au programme la chronique ammanite de notre collaborateur George Weibdeh et les critiques des films et de la culture. Pour vous inscrire, adressez tout simplement un courrier électronique à : [le-jourdain@eudoramail.com](mailto:le-jourdain@eudoramail.com) Vous recevrez directement dans votre boîte aux lettres les rubriques de la semaine.



## Les mots de la semaine

## La quête des origines

Les langues de presque toutes les régions du monde ont des racines communes. Elles sont issues d'un même tronc, le proto-indo-européen. C'est pourquoi on les appelle langues indo-européennes. Elles sont réparties dans presque toutes les régions du monde, de l'Europe à l'Asie, du Nord à l'Amérique du Sud. Elles ont des caractéristiques communes, comme l'usage de mots composés, l'existence de déclinaisons, etc. Mais elles ont aussi des particularités, comme le vocabulaire, la syntaxe, etc. C'est pourquoi on les appelle langues indo-européennes.

ont emporté avec eux un état plus archaïque de leur langue, mais ils n'ont pas eu de plus l'occasion d'assimiler les traits des langues autochtones qu'ils rencontraient. Ainsi, le nom de roi est bâti sur la racine reg-. Bien attestée en sanskrit (raja), en latin (rex) et en celtique (-rix), il serait vain de la chercher en slave, en grec ou en arménien. L'indo-européen s'est en effet heurté à un substrat linguistique important auquel il a fait de nombreux emprunts. Il semblerait qu'en certains endroits, la résistance à la langue ait été totale, même s'il est délicat de dire si ces peuples habitaient leur région avant l'arrivée des Indo-Européens ou s'ils ne s'y sont établis que plus tard. C'est par exemple le cas des Etrusques, qui habitaient la Toscane (nord de l'Italie actuelle) au moment où la puissance romaine se formait. Leur langue, non indo-européenne, bien qu'écrite avec l'alphabet grec, n'a pas encore pu être clairement identifiée. On ignore leur provenance, ainsi que la date de leur établissement en Italie. Actuellement, quelques langues d'Europe ne sont pas indo-européennes. Il s'agit essentiellement du basque, de l'ibère, du hongrois, du finnois et du turc. Pour certaines d'entre elles, le mystère de leurs origines est toujours entier... ■

V. A.-N.

## C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

## Cinéma

Cycle La France vue par Melville, Chabrol, Pialat.

*Boh le flambeur*, un film de Jean-Pierre Melville (1956), 16 mm, 100', NB, sous-titré en arabe, avec R. Duchesne et I. Corey. Un gangster retiré accepte un dernier coup: le cambriolage du Casino de Deauville. Séances au Centre culturel français le lundi 30 novembre à 18h30 et 20h30.

## Exposition

Peinture abstraite par un jeune artiste jordanien, Mohammad Abu Aziz. Expo. du 7 au 28 novembre au Centre culturel français.

## Du neuf dans Le Jourdain

Bientôt dans Le Jourdain :

Une chronique bimensuelle sur l'actualité multimédia au Proche Orient

Un entretien hebdomadaire avec un responsable politique jordanien

## Fonds publics

## Des comptes à dormir debout

**Exclusif. Le rapport de l'audit annuel des finances publiques vient d'être présenté au Parlement. Ses conclusions, accablantes, évoquent le détournement ou la mauvaise gestion de plus d'un milliard de dinars. Des hautes sphères de l'administration à l'employé de base, le Bureau d'audit jordanien n'a épargné personne.**

Les questions posées par le rapport du Bureau d'audit jordanien (BAJ, voir encadré), présenté la semaine dernière au gouvernement, embarrassent. Faut-il avoir peur du fonctionnement des institutions publiques? Quelle attitude le gouvernement doit-il adopter face à la corruption? Le "relâchement administratif" qui gangrène la plupart des établissements d'état est-il curable? Ces dernières années, le changement de la structure financière du pays et de la nature même du fonctionnement des institutions a créé une situation dans laquelle la dérive financière, la corruption et l'arnaque pure et simple ont trouvé un terrain fertile.

## De la mauvaise gestion au détournement

L'audit des finances publiques pour l'année 97 révèle ainsi toutes les formes d'infractions financières, d'une mauvaise gestion à la corruption, en passant par le vol pur et simple, ou par l'usage détourné du budget de l'état. Les chiffres parlent: un milliard de dinars, dus à l'état par les différents ministères et les établissements

## Le BAJ, bonne conscience du gouvernement

Le Bureau d'audit jordanien (BAJ) est un département officiel dépendant du cabinet du Premier ministre, et est tenu de présenter au Parlement un rapport annuel comprenant les observations et les recommandations nécessaires, ainsi que le relevé des infractions financières commises. En 1995, la Banque centrale a été mise sous le contrôle du BAJ. Et d'une façon générale, le BAJ a un œil sur tous les boîtes de commandes excédant

investisseurs étrangers, leur garantissant en quelque sorte que les institutions avec lesquelles ils seront amenés à traiter ne sont pas gangrénées par la fraude et la corruption. Le BAJ est un département officiel dépendant du cabinet du Premier ministre, et est tenu de présenter au Parlement un rapport annuel comprenant les observations et les recommandations nécessaires, ainsi que le relevé des infractions financières commises. En 1995, la Banque centrale a été mise sous le contrôle du BAJ. Et d'une façon générale, le BAJ a un œil sur tous les boîtes de commandes excédant

5000 dinars d'argent public. Le Bureau d'audit jordanien a cet été adopté une nouvelle démarche de contrôle des dépenses des fonds publics, en établissant un plan stratégique sur dix ans (1998-2008). Les changements structurels de l'économie jordanienne devraient donc être pris en compte sans tarder. Les règlements régissant le fonctionnement du BAJ sont donc actuellement en pleine refonte, et s'adaptent peu à peu aux nouvelles techniques de détournement. ■

Le Jourdain

bénéficiant de subventions directes (sans ministère de tutelle), ont été dépensés sans justification. Pour la façon d'appliquer la loi, la division est simple: cette somme représente environ deux cent cinquante dinars par Jorlandien. Presque

deux mois du salaire moyen jordanien par habitant. On est passé de cet argent? Comment s'est-il "disparu"? Le rapport évoque des pratiques de fraude fiscale, des commandes de matériel, qui est semblé-t-il une demande très volatile -, et la disparition

lois en vigueur sur la fiscalité des établissements publics. Au Ministère de l'éducation nationale, les auditeurs du BAJ ont constaté des "trous" dans les fonds d'argent liquide - qui est semblé-t-il une demande très volatile -, et la disparition

d'équipements scolaires dans de nombreuses écoles réparties sur tout le pays. Mais outre ces cas de vols commis par des fonctionnaires qui détournent les commandes passées pour le compte des services publics, il existe également des cas de gestion qui, s'ils ne relèvent pas de malversation pure et simple, sont des exemples d'utilisation chaotique des fonds publics. Ainsi, les auditeurs du BAJ ont relevé des incohérences qui laissent sans voix. Par exemple,

le projet du réseau de télédiffusion multichanale de la télévision jordanienne, s'il a coûté plus de 800 000 dinars aux contribuables n'a remporté qu'un marché bien peu susceptible d'amortir son coût de lancement puisqu'il ne compte à ce jour que 450 abonnés. De même, dans les entrepôts de la compagnie nationale des télécommunications, les auditeurs ont trouvé un stock de téléphones mobiles inutilisés pour une valeur de 9 millions de dinars. Dans la même veine, la compagnie nationale de transport aérien a passé commande, pour un montant de plus de 6 millions de dinars, de pièces détachées qui pourraient - pour certaines depuis 1985 - dans des dépôts sans être utilisées. L'entreprise est actuellement endettée auprès des banques locales à hauteur de 13 millions de dinars, et est particulièrement éreintée par le rapport. Selon l'un des auditeurs en charge de suivre et de vérifier les dépenses de la compagnie aérienne, "l'argent réservé pour payer le département des impôts et la Sécurité sociale n'a jamais été versé dans les délais". «De plus, ajoute-t-il, des employés de cette compagnie sont étrangers et ne sont même pas inscrits à la Sécurité sociale. Quant aux dépenses dues aux appels téléphoniques et à l'entretien des équipements, elles ont largement dépassé la part du budget annuel qui leur

est allouée. » Le rapport indique de plus que ladite compagnie a dû couvrir de nombreuses dépenses de voyageurs en transit sans qu'aucun contrat légal avec les débiteurs stipule les conditions de remboursements.

Par ailleurs, la vérification des comptes d'emprunts réservés au logement des membres du Conseil d'administration de la poste centrale a montré que plus de 120 000 dinars sont toujours en souffrance de remboursement.

## Santé : 32 infractions relevées

En ce qui concerne l'administration de la santé publique, 32 infractions ont été relevées. L'audit fait notamment état de commandes de médicaments absolument fantaisistes, telle l'acquisition de plus de 300 000 comprimés d'un certain principe actif, lorsque l'utilisation moyenne du dit médicament représente en moyenne 1000 comprimés par an en Jordanie. Soit la constitution d'une réserve pour trois siècles, précaution très optimiste au regard des dates de péremption des médicaments.

Cependant, il serait illusoire de penser que ces malversations se limitent aux hautes sphères de l'administration. Les cas d'irrégularités de petite envergure sont légions et montrent que chacun grappille à sa mesure. Ainsi, une université

du sud du pays doit au gouvernement plus de 220 000 dinars pour simple facture téléphonique: dix lignes téléphoniques étaient laissées en libre accès sans qu'aucune justification ne soit fournie. A Amman, le directeur d'un bureau de poste a tout simplement fait un virement de 16800 dinars sur son compte avant de donner sa démission. L'un de ses collègues du sud du pays a fait de même: avant de partir il a vidé le coffre de la caisse d'épargne.

## 1,3 millions de dinars envolés

Mais les espèces sonnantes et trébuchantes ne sont pas seules en cause. En ce qui concerne l'administration du tourisme, le rapport d'audit affirme que la plupart des employés sont sous-qualifiés par rapport aux tâches dont ils sont en charge. Seuls 60% d'entre eux sont titulaires d'un baccalauréat, et au moins 40% sont affectés à des emplois qui ne correspondent pas à leurs études. Passe-droits? Emplois de complaisance? Le rapport ne dit rien des raisons de ses incohérences mais note que dans ce cas précis, il ne s'agit pas seulement de mauvaise utilisation des fonds publics: le manque à gagner pour le pays se trouve en aval. En effet, la durée moyenne du séjour touristique est passée de 2,75 nuits par visiteur en 95, à 2,58 nuits en 96.

Cependant, malgré une investigation longue et acharnée, le BAJ avoue avoir perdu la trace de plus de 1,3 millions de dinars tout simplement envolés dans des divers services administratifs et ministériels. ■

Le Jourdain

## Sécurité

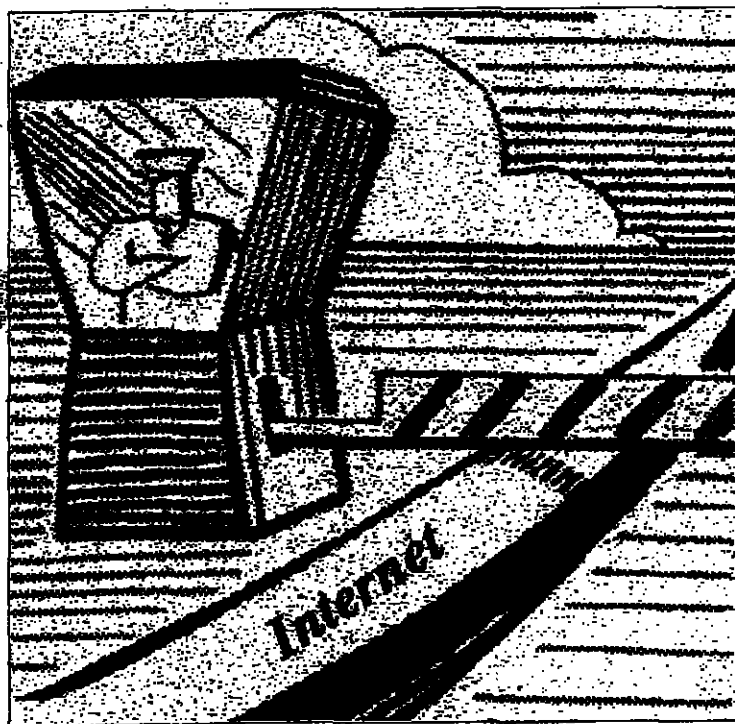
## Une liberté sous haute surveillance

En Jordanie comme partout ailleurs, un contrôle est exercé sur les flux d'informations qui transitent par le réseau mondial. Mais si les possibilités techniques de surveillance sont immenses, l'abondance des données qui circule en permanence sur la Toile rendent impossible un contrôle total.

Qui dit Internet dit flux d'informations. Qui dit flux d'informations dit danger potentiel. Partout où l'Internet est implanté et accessible aux populations, les services dits spéciaux gardent un œil inquiet et averti sur tout ce qui touche au transfert de données par voie informatique, ainsi qu'à la possibilité de consulter des sites web dont les informations peuvent apparaître subversives, légales ou dangereuses. A titre d'exemple, la plupart des grandes écoles militaires ont ouvert à leurs étudiants des sections à dominante "Nouvelles technologies de l'information", preuve que le sujet ne laisse en général pas indifférents les personnes en charge de la sécurité des états. En Jordanie, si le gouvernement admet exercer un contrôle (comme à peu près partout ailleurs), il affirme n'exercer aucune censure quant aux sites consultés.

## Quel contrôle ?

Mais quel est exactement ce contrôle? Si chaque état se sent en général bien de préciser les modalités du "contrôle" qu'il effectue sur l'Internet, il n'en reste pas moins que les possibilités techniques de ces "contrôles" sont bien connues. Dans le cas particulier de la Jordanie, pour le trafic Internet, qu'il soit constitué de correspondance par mail (version française de l'e-mail), ou de consultation de sites, passe par un "firewall" gouvernemental, sorte de filtre-relais qui réacheminera les données informatiques vers les serveurs d'accès Internet (comme Global One, ou Nets en Jordanie). C'est à ce niveau de communication que tout contrôle est possible. Ainsi, un mail envoyé de Jordanie en France va suivre un chemin complexe et tortueux. Depuis l'ordinateur d'envoi ou l'adresse composée, le message est envoyé via les lignes téléphoniques classiques jusqu'au serveur du fournisseur d'accès qui va le stocker brièvement. Il est ensuite acheminé vers le "firewall" gouvernemental jordanien qui le relaie ensuite, via satellite, jusqu'à un serveur basé



des messages, et rendent sans suite leur interception par un tiers. Mais l'utilisation de ces logiciels, comme PGP (Pretty good privacy), est interdite par la loi, à l'exception de certains cas particuliers. En général il faut que les "clés logiques" détenues par les correspondants soient remises à un "tiers de confiance" à qui les autorités peuvent les demander en cas de suspicion. De tels logiciels sont par exemple utilisés par les réseaux pépouilles pour crypter les fichiers concernant leur "relais". D'où la nécessité d'interdire l'utilisation non réglementée de ces programmes.

## Un "traçage" techniquement possible

De plus, il est techniquement possible de "tracer" les connexions des utilisateurs, et de voir quand et sur quel site telle ou telle personne s'est connectée. Mais là encore, le nombre de connexions est tel qu'un contrôle total est impossible. Mais ce qui peut paraître à certains une violation de la vie privée est finalement une chose bien banale et n'est certainement pas l'apanage des Etats. Dans les bureaux ou un serveur local relie tous les ordinateurs connectés à l'Internet, l'employeur peut sans aucun problème avoir un œil toutes les activités informatiques de ses employés. Et si un ordinateur est partagé entre plusieurs utilisateurs, chacun peut connaître les sites auxquels se sont connectés les autres, via la "mémoire-cache" de l'ordinateur, qui garde pendant un certain temps des traces des sites consultés. ■

Le Jourdain

(avec Anan Sh. Nasereddin)

## Théâtre

## Pas de langue de bois sur les planches

A qui n'a pas de droits se joue depuis presque six mois à guichet fermé. La recette d'un tel succès? Une bonne dose d'humour, beaucoup d'impertinence, et un franc parler à toute épreuve.

Depuis le mois de juillet, une comédie ne cesse de recueillir le succès. Le Théâtre du Concorde, à toutes les représentations de A qui n'a pas de droits (la subtilité de l'expression échappe à la traduction française), affiche complet, et ce, malgré le prix élevé de la place. Parmi le public: jeunes, moins jeunes, intellectuels mais également Jordaniens des classes populaires. A travers le prisme du chômage, fléau à la fois actuel et insolvable de la société jordanienne, cette comédie de l'auteur et réalisateur Mohammed Chawakfeh dissèque l'ambre réaliste de la vie quotidienne des Jordaniens.

## Une valse de petits métiers

Durant trois heures, Moussa Higazine, dans le rôle de Ata, cherche par le biais de métiers aussi divers qu'improbables, à nourrir sa famille. Tout d'abord il vend des chewing-gum près d'un brasero, au coin d'une rue, comme de nombreux autres chômeurs. Parmi eux, un ancien rédacteur en chef, discret allusion à la fermeture, l'an dernier, de nombreux hebdomadaires jordaniens suite à la nouvelle loi sur la presse. Ensuite, changeant de vêtements et d'accent (camouflage qui n'est pas toujours couronné de succès), il se présente comme un "ouvrier égyptien", pour pouvoir travailler dans une station-service, avec des "concitoyens" égyptiens comme lui.



Le visage jovial de Moussa Higazine, qui interprète "Ata" dans A qui n'a pas de droits, de Mohammed Chawakfeh

Troisième casquette, un "entrepreneur" qui organise des matches de boxe persuadé Ata de défrayer un boxeur israélien. Enfin, et c'est un comble, un vieil ami opportuniste propose à Ata un emploi pour le moins surprenant: après s'être grisé, déguisé et maquillé, Ata exerce les fonctions de femme de ménage. Sri Lankaise dans la riche villa d'un nant d'Amman ouest!

Bien sûr, nombre de détails, traits sur le mode comique ou tragi-comique, n'apparaissent pas dans la trame, mais évoque des sujets importants de la vie jordanienne tels la corruption, la normalisation avec Israël, l'inquiétude et le manque de perspectives de la population. Une chose est certaine, la fran-

chise dont est empreint le scénario de A qui n'a pas de droits, contraste certainement avec le discours convenu des hommes politiques et, dans une certaine mesure, avec celui de la presse. Le public jordanien se reconnaît dans les mésaventures de Ata, et y trouve des situations dans lesquelles il se reconnaît. La dernière scène de la pièce est particulièrement explicite. Ata, devenu "sri-lankaise" par nécessité, trouve des documents compromettants dans la villa cossue où il est employé. Régulièrement, ministres, parlementaires, hommes d'affaires s'y retrouvent.

## «Tue-le!»

Ces documents prouvent de façon indéniable une affaire de

corruption. Ata s'adresse alors directement au public. D'une certaine façon, le voile tombe: on ne joue plus. «Si je le laisse libre, on nous dira "voilà, théâtre ne sert qu'à divertir. Si je le tue, on nous dira "vous incitez à la violence"... Alors qu'est-ce que je fais? Unanime, le public répond: «Tue-le!» Ce qui traduit assez bien l'exaspération des Jordaniens à l'égard de la corruption, et de l'indulgence "officielle" à son égard. A qui n'a pas de droits est une comédie cent pour cent jordanienne dans laquelle nombre de citoyens du Royaume Hachémite se reconnaîtront sûrement. A voir absolument. ■

Suleiman Sweiss

STAR ON LINE  
<http://star.arabia.com>



# The Star Stadium

Edited by Abdul-Hamid Addasi

## Pan-Arab Games update

15-31 August, 1999

### Crown Prince Hassan meets the Arab Ministers of Youth

HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, received at the Royal Court the Arab Ministers of Youth's Committee Delegation, formed to follow the Jordanian preparations for the forthcoming 9th Pan Arab Games.

In the meeting, Mr Sataa Al Hassan, the Minister of Youth, briefed the Crown Prince on the latest construction developments for the games. All the Arab Ministers present congratulated His Royal Highness on the efforts currently being undertaken by the Jordanian preparatory committees.

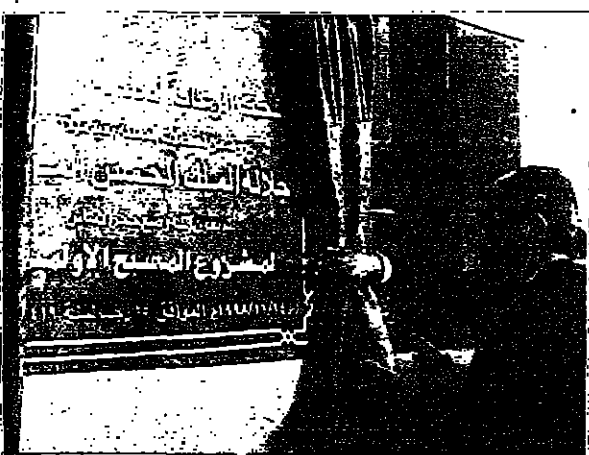
The meeting was also attended by Mr Abdul Ellah Al Khateeb, the Foreign Minister, and by Mr Essam Aridah, the Games Director.



### Jordanian preparations get the thumbs up

Chairman of the Public Department of Youth in Bahrain, Sheikh Issa Ben Rashid, said that he is proud of the Jordanian preparations being undertaken to host the next Pan Arab Games. He added that Bahrain is ready to contribute to the success of the games by sending a large athletic delegation. His statement was made at a meeting of the Arab Ministers of Youth's Committee, held last week. The Committee consists of the Ministers of Youth from various Arab countries, and was formed to oversee the Jordanian preparations for 9th Pan Arab Games.

### Minister of Youth lays the foundation stone



Mr Sataa Al Hassan, the Minister of Youth, laid the foundation stone for the new sports constructions being built for the next Pan Arab Games. Currently under construction are the Olympic Swimming Pool and the Multi Sports Hall.

The Olympic Swimming Pool project will include a 50m x 25m pool, and a 20m x 21m diving pool. There will be seating capacity for 1,500 spectators, and the whole project is expected to take up 8,000 square meters of Sports City.

The Multi Sports Hall has been estimated at 12,600 square meters, and will have a seating capacity for 7,500 spectators, who will be able to watch many sports, including Basketball, Handball, Volleyball, Badminton and Bowling. The Sports Hall will also include changingrooms for the athletes and coaches, as well as a cafeteria and other service related facilities.

### Search for new coach continues

Jordan's Handball Federation continued their search for a new professional handball coach for the national team. Mr Sari Hamdan, the Federation President, said that they were studying many offers from Romanian and Croatian coaches, all of whom are highly qualified and able to lead the Jordanian team.

The detailed negotiations that were held with the Egyptian coach, Jamal Shams, unfortunately came to nothing. Mr Shams—who led Egypt to 7th place in the world rankings—had demanded an unreasonable wage packet, which the Federation were unable to meet.



### Handball team to play in Saudi Arabia

Jordan's Mens Handball team will begin its campaign for next years World Cup, to be held in Cairo. Jordan will be participating in Saudi Arabia this week, and the winners of the West Asian championship will qualify for the World Cup in Egypt. Jordan will face teams from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Confidence and enthusiasm is very high in the Jordanian camp, following due to the good performance from Al Ahli Club, who finished fourth in the recent Arab Handball Club's Championship, held in Amman last week.

## English School celebrates King's birthday

AMMAN (The Star)—Celebrating His Majesty The King's birthday, The English School in Amman held a special festival on the occasion, last Wednesday 18 November. The exhibit began with the National Anthem, followed by various activities, where students delivered speeches expressing their jubilation for the occasion. Poems and songs were also recited, embodying His Majesty The King's achievements.

The Board Chairman and the Headmistress attended the festival, along with all the committee members. At the end of the festival, the Headmistress distributed graduation certificates to all the students of the school.

The final matches of the Junior Basketball and Football League were also held on the school premises, on 20 November. The results were as follows:

**The Basketball League**  
1st place: Al Achbal Cheese  
2nd place: The Safeway team  
3rd place: The Sea Bridge  
4th place: KLM—Royal Dutch Airlines

**The Football League**  
1st place: Gate Avionics



2nd place: The Safeway team  
3rd place: KLM—Royal Dutch Airlines

4th place: Boy cheese  
After the Junior Leagues were concluded, Saeed Turk and

Mrs Olivia Bhoti distributed cups and medals to the winning students.

## NBA dead-lock continues

NEW YORK—A day after finally getting somewhere, the opposing sides in the NBA lockout deal with the realization that plenty of work remains to be done.

More than 120 players held a conference call and were told that the owners had heeded the union's call for compromise bargaining. But the sides are at odds over numerous issues that won't be settled easily.

"Our best offer and their best offer are not matching, and that means there's still a pretty big gap between us. And that's going to be a problem," commissioner David Stern said. "It's really quite a hill that we have to climb."

An exact date for a resumption of talks has not yet been set, but a meeting should take place early in the week. The owners also spent the day assessing the compromises discussed.

Some of the progress could be measured in body language. As owners, players and lawyers milled around after dinner, they spoke casually to each other, joked around and seemed far more at ease than in past negotiating sessions.

"How was your steak and ugliest lobster?" Antonio Davis of the Pacers asked Dave Checketts of the ownership group. "Actually, I had a sandwich." "I had the 70 year old, Checketts, smiling."

Owner Mickey Arison of

the Miami Heat was in such good spirits that he took the risk of teasing the temperamental Alonzo Mourning about his fight with Larry Johnson in last year's first-round play-off series against the Knicks. Mourning bit his lip in response.

The best explanation for the lightened mood was the movement by both sides on the main number that has been keeping them apart—the percentage of basketball related income that should be devoted to player salaries. Owners, who had been asking for a 50-50 split, moved more than two percentage points. Players, who had been tying the implementation of the escrow tax to a 60-percent share of the pie, also moved at least two points.

"We did some yeoman work today, but this deal is so varied and complex that there's still a lot more to be done," Stern said. "There are a huge number of issues and an enormous number of details that stand between us and a deal."

Owners still want a maximum salary tied to a fixed percentage of the salary cap (25 percent for players with 1-6 years of experience, 30 percent in years 7-9 and 35 percent for 10-year veterans). The players, meanwhile, still want a luxury tax on owners to be the main deterrent against any player signing a contract for more than \$15 million annu-

ally. The owners want a four-year rookie salary scale with an additional right of first refusal (the union has offered a four-year scale with no right of first refusal), and they want changes to the "timing rules" that benefit teams who sign other teams' free agents while below the cap and then re-sign their own free agents under the Larry Bird exception to exceed the cap. The union says such a change would stifle player movement.

The owners also want to lower the maximum annual raise from 20 percent to 5 percent, although the Bird exception contracts could have 10-percent raises. The union wants raises to be tied to the greater of 10-percent or the annual percentage increase in league revenue.

Both sides have offered higher minimum salaries for veterans, but they are apart on exactly how much higher. Each of those issues could take days to be settled, and there are at least a dozen other non-economic items on which the sides are completely at odds.

Even when an agreement is reached in principle, it could take a week to put it on paper and have it signed before the lockout will be lifted and training camps can open. The bottom line: it still appears the season won't start until 1999.

## Esperance on the way to winning the African Title

TUNIS—Esperance ST of Tunisia beat Angola's Primeiro Agosto 3-1 in the first leg of the African Cup Winners Cup final this week.

The scorers for Esperance ST were Radhi Jaouli (6 minutes), Ayadi Hamrouni (45 minute penalty), and Sami Laaroussi (55 minutes). The three goals followed an opening goal from Primeiro Agosto, scored by Mwana in the second minute.

The first leg was played at Al Menzah Stadium, in Tunis, and attracted a 35,000 crowd. The return leg will be held at the Citadela Stadium, in Luanda, on 6 December.

**Qualified to final**  
Esperance  
First round—Stade Malien, Mali 3-1 (agg)  
Second round—Express, Uganda 2-1 (agg)  
Quarter-finals—Milingo, Gabon 4-0 (agg)  
Semi-finals—Wydad Casablanca, Morocco 4-3 (agg)

**Premiers**  
First round—Notwane, Botswana 5-3 (agg)  
Second round—Fire Brigade, Mauritius 9-2 (agg)  
Quarter-finals—ESMA, Algeria 5-1 (agg)  
Semi-finals—Africa Sports, Cote d'Ivoire 5-3 (agg)

**Previous winners**  
1975 (Toussere Yaounde, Cameroon), 1976 (Shooting Stars, Nigeria), 1977 (Zongu Rangers, Nigeria), 1978 (Horoya, Guinea), 1979 (Canon Yaounde, Cameroon), 1980 (TP Mazembe, DR Congo), 1981 (Union Douala, Cameroon), 1982-1983 (Arab Contractors, Egypt), 1984, 1985, 1986 (Al Ahly, Egypt), 1987 (Gor Mahia, Kenya), 1988 (C.A. Elefant, Tunisia), 1989 (Al Merreikh, Sudan), 1990 (BCC Lions, Nigeria), 1991 (Power Dynamos, Zambia), 1992 (Africa Sports, Cote d'Ivoire), 1993 (Al Ahly, Egypt), 1994 (DC Motema Pembe, DR Congo), 1995 (JS Kabylie, Algeria), 1996 (Arab Contractors, Egypt), 1997 (Stade du Sahel, Tunisia).

## Football Roundup

### Italian 1st Division match reports

**AC Milan (1) Lazio (0)**  
Milan appeared destined for its fifth consecutive draw until Brazilian Leonardo popped in a winner a minute into injury time. Victory made partial amends for exit from the Italian Cup at the hands of Lazio earlier this month.

**Florentina (3) Inter Milan (1)**  
Three goals in the first 16 minutes — two for Fiorentina after later had taken the lead with a penalty, won by Roberto Baggio and converted by Yuri Djorkaeff. German Joerg Heinrich wrapped up victory with a 78th-minute strike, his first since he arrived in Italy.

**Juventus (0) Empoli (0)**  
Juventus has now gone five matches without a win and its dominated match of this clash will be no compensation. Alessandro Del Piero's absence was sorely missed in front of goal.

**Salernitana (1) Venezia (0)**  
Striker Marco Di Vaio hit the bar with a penalty, a goal was disallowed and a man sent off, but Salernitana still won the clash of the bottom two. An own-goal by Fabio Bilica ensured the Venice side remained bottom.

**Sampdoria (0) Vicenza (0)**  
Ariel Ortega missed a penalty. Samp's third penalty miss in their last five attempts. The Genoa side was whistled off after this dreary, error-ridden draw which did not help either team.

**Udinese (1) Piacenza (0)**  
Brazilian Amoroso missed a penalty and both sides finished with 10 men. Filippo Inzaghi's younger brother Simone saw red early in the second half and Udinese's Alessandro Pierini was dismissed for two handballs in the space of a minute.



Marco Simone shields the ball for Paris SG

**Bologna (1) Perugia (1)**  
Bologna clocked up its 14th consecutive match without defeat but really should have won a clash it dominated. It had to come from behind after Croat Milan Rapajc had put the visitors ahead against the run of play. Both sides hit the woodwork. Former Lazio idol Giuseppe Signori was booked for diving.

**Cagliari (1) Parma (0)**  
Parma has beaten Juventus and Fiorentina this season but cannot tame Serie A's lesser sides. Mohamed Kallon's close range 78th-minute goal handed Parma its first defeat in seven outings and moved the Sardinians into seventh.

**AS Roma (1) Bari (1)**  
Bari again proved difficult to beat, having lost just once in 10 matches this season. The south-easters could have taken all three points thanks to a goal from South Africa's Phil Masinga. But newly capped Italy striker Francesco Totti leveled the score from the penalty spot eight minutes from time to hand Roma its fourth draw in seven matches.

### English Premier League match reports

**Aston Villa (2) Liverpool (4)**  
Villa lost for the first time this season as headers from Paul Ince and Robbie Fowler had Liverpool up 2-0 after seven minutes. Dion Dublin pulled one back just after halftime but Fowler went on to complete a hat-trick. Dublin scored again, his seventh in three games, but missed a chance for a second successive hat-trick when his penalty was well saved by David James. Villa's Stan Col-

lymore was sent off after pushing Michael Owen—his second bookable offense.

**Blackburn (0) Southampton (2)**  
Matt Oakley scored after four minutes and Steve Basham scored after 89 earned Southampton its first away win of the season and hauled it off the bottom—above Blackburn.

**Leeds Utd (4) Charlton A. (1)**  
Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink got his fourth goal in four games. Lee Bower also scored for Leeds — as did teenager Alan Smith on his home debut and

Australian Harry Kewell. Paul Mordimer replied for Charlton.

**Leicester City (2) Chelsea (4)**  
Uncharacteristically poor defending by Leicester handed first-half goals to Gianfranco Zola and Gustavo Poyet. Muzzy Izet replied, Tore Andre Flo made it 3-1 but Leicester battled back again as Steve Guppy made it 3-2 on the hour. Zola sealed victory with his second goal in injury time.

**Middlesboro (2) Coventry (0)**  
A tense game was finally

opened up by Dean Gordon in the 66th minute and as Coventry pressed for the equalizer, hot-shot Hamilton Ricard banged in his second to make it 2-0.

**Sheffield W (3) Man Utd (1)**  
Wednesday, with only one win in 10 games, got a goal from Nicolas Alexanderson, who was helped by a bad error by Peter Schmeichel. Schmeichel let the ball slip through his hands. Andy Cole leveled in the 29th minute but bad defending enabled Wim Jonk to make it 2-1 in the 55th. Alexanderson scored his second in the 73rd for a deserved Wednesday win.

**Tottenham (2) Notts F. (0)**  
Forest was holding the Spurs until Steve Stone was sent off early in the second half for his second bookable offense. The home side, inspired by David Ginola, took immediate advantage with a goal by Chris Armstrong. Allan Nielsen completed the win.

**Wimbledon (1) Arsenal (0)**  
Lackluster Arsenal was out-fought by its London rival and went down to a 77th-minute goal by Efan Ekoku. Arsenal lost Patrick Vieira and Dennis Bergkamp with injuries just four days before its European Champions' League match against RC Lens. Vieira was rated very doubtful and Bergkamp 50-50.

### German 1st Division results

Bochum (1) B. Leverkusen (5)  
Nuremberg (1) Wolfsburg (1)  
H. Berlin (1) B. Munch (0)  
Stuttgart (1) H. Rostock (0)  
1860 Munich (0) Hamburg (0)  
Kaiserslautern (1) Dortmund (0)  
E. Frankfurt (0) W. Bremen (2)  
Schalke 04 (2) Duisburg (0)

### Spanish 1st Division results

Espanyol (1) R. Santander (1)  
Salamanca (2) Extremadura (1)  
D. Coruna (2) Villarreal (1)  
R. Sociedad (0) R. Zaragoza (0)  
Alaves (2) Celta Vigo (0)  
Mallorca (1) Barcelona (0)  
Oviedo (0) Real Betis (1)  
Valencia (3) Real Madrid (1)  
Tenerife (0) Athletic Bilbao (1)



Action from Athletic Bilbao's match at Tenerife



THE STAR'S

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## Symbol SPT 1500 hand-held wonder does it all: An office in your palm

AN INNOVATIVE product, that brings together the worlds of hand-held computing, barcode devices and sales automation is the Symbol SPT 1500.

This product is taking the international market by storm, owing to its ease-of-use and efficiency. Symbol Technologies, an industry leading provider of barcode laser scanning solutions, is used in tracking and monitoring movement for large volumes of goods in a warehouse, or storage facility, and mobile data capture equipment for delivery and sales persons.

Symbol's success across the region is highlighted by the large number of companies that have deployed Symbol equipment throughout their operations.

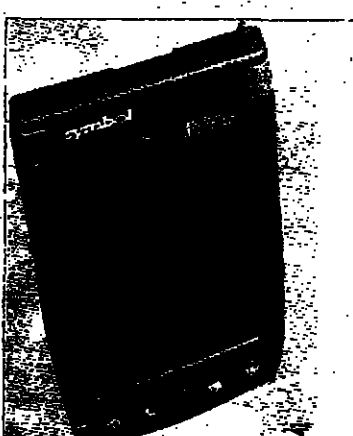
Sales force staff information concerning shipment to customers is handled on Symbol PDT 3100 hand-held

terminals. The terminals are being used to capture data on site by the sales person delivering the goods to clients, at the same time, point of sale is done via the hand held unit, immediately generating the respective document (invoice or receipt).

At the end of the day, data is uploaded to the main database.

Symbol hand-held terminals allowed for quick and accurate communications to and from the head office computer system, improving accuracy in verifying and reconciling sales reports and invoices. Paperwork and errors are dramatically reduced, and the administrative process is streamlined—enabling the field force to spend more time in the office and less in the field.

Symbol products have been implemented across a wide range of business applications including retailing, package and parcel delivery, to warehousing and distribution as well as manufacturing and health care.



The Jordan distributors for Symbol are General Computers & Electronics, who can be reached on telephone 5513879; or check out the Symbol web site at [www.symbol.com](http://www.symbol.com).

## PCs bundled with Kodak cameras!

DELL COMPUTER Corp. said it will sell Kodak digital cameras with some of its personal computers in a bid to lure the growing number of Americans sending holiday cards and photos over the Internet.

Dell said that for an additional \$499, it will add the Kodak DC210 digital zoom camera to its Dimension computers. Digital cameras allow users to view

and edit pictures before printing and often produce crisper images. A survey said 60 percent of personal computer users are likely to e-mail messages or photos for the holidays. Dell will offer a computer and camera for \$2,786, including a 400 megahertz Intel Pentium II processor, a 17-inch screen, a 3.5-inch floppy drive, a CD-ROM drive, a printer, and a mouse.

lowest priced model with camera starts at \$1,698. Eastman Kodak Co. has a similar agreement with a European computer distributor, Tinty, which bundles its personal computers with a Kodak camera for retail sale. While digital camera makers are stepping up their marketing efforts, analysts say it is a niche product, although admittedly a growing niche. As the number of digital cameras may become more popular, consumers are expected to buy five million PCs over the holiday season.

ment across a wide range of business applications including retailing, package and parcel delivery, to warehousing and distribution as well as manufacturing and health care.

## Cisco announces new generation of video on demand and live video

CISCO SYSTEMS, today announced its latest IPTV solution that delivers a comprehensive set of network video services for corporate intranets, including video on demand (VOD), live video and scheduled video broadcasting. Cisco's new family of IPTV systems, the IPTV 3400 Series Servers, deliver TV-quality video programs to PC users over corporate networks; allowing organizations to send training classes, corporate communications, management seminars, university classes and more, right to employee desktops.

IPTV delivers TV-quality video programming over enterprise data networks to desktop personal computers (PCs) via

Cisco's IPTV software running on its IPTV 3400 Series Servers.

Using IPTV, every networked PC user can watch company broadcasts, join training programs, study in university classes, and keep up-to-date with business TV and other programs from the convenience of their own desktop. According to Cisco, the impact of this new technology is seen in more efficient communications and better informed, more productive employees. IPTV software is comprised of three components: IPTV Content Manager, IPTV Server, and IPTV Viewer. These components work together to provide easy management, transmission and desktop viewing of video programs.

Cisco's IPTV hardware is comprised of additional components: IPTV 3410 Control Server, IPTV 3420 Broadcast Server, and IPTV 3430 Archive Server. These hardware platforms are pre-configured with the IPTV software, creating a complete network video solution. Together, IPTV software and pre-configured hardware provide superior live, scheduled, and video-on-demand solutions for businesses everywhere. An affordable network-video system, IPTV uses standard protocols, runs on existing IP networks and is backed by Cisco.

## EVEREX establishes presence in Middle East

FUTURE HI-TECH announced that it has been selected by global solutions giant, Everex Systems, Inc. as exclusive distributor for the Middle East region.

Based in Fremont, California, Everex has turned its focus to the Middle East, sub-continent and non-French speaking Africa in its push into new markets.

Commenting on the new relationship, Mr. Kent Geeng, Everex Vice President for International Operations, noted that his company's gaze had traditionally been westward. "This new relationship with Future Hi-Tech is a sign of our commitment to the Middle East, Asian, and African mar-

kets. Initially, we focused on the US and European markets when First International Computer (FIC), Inc. took over Everex four years ago, but the Middle East, Asia, and Africa have always held enormous potential for us."

Future Hi-Tech will work closely with Everex to reach targeted objectives.

Everex's new business investment will include extensive training for Future Hi-Tech's personnel where the company will seek to duplicate its service structures plus marketing strategy where appropriate—however, it does intend to be led by its distributor's regional experience.

Everex has been a leading

supplier of PCs, Notebooks and Servers to the USA market since 1983. With breakthroughs in cutting-edge technology and an active research and development facility at Silicon Valley, USA, Everex has positioned itself with top-tier computer companies, supplying PCs, Notebooks and Servers to many departments of the US Government and military, major corporations and consumers throughout the USA.

Future Hi-Tech is strategically located in the Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE and is the regional distributor for Everex products. Their other partners include Kyocera, Ascend and Extreme Networks.

## News update

Own An iMac for \$29.99 a month

Apple announced the industry's most aggressive financing program which enables customers to buy an iMac for just \$29.99 per month. Apple's financing program features instant in-store credit approval, no payments for 120 days, and one of the lowest interest rates available: to consumers anywhere.

"For the price of three pizzas a month, you can own an iMac," said Steve Jobs, Apple's interim CEO. "The world's coolest consumer computer has just become the most

affordable." Participating Apple resellers all over the USA are offering instant in-store credit approval using Apple's web-based loan application. Approved buyers can take their iMacs home with no down payment, and with no payments for 120 days.

Apple's financing program also lets customers finance add-on products, including printers, storage devices, scanners and software, which can be added at any time during the first 90 days after the computer purchase.

AOL buys Netscape  
America.On Line, the world's largest on-line service,

has acquired Netscape Communications, producers of the Navigator & Communicator web software.

The deal went through this Tuesday (24 November, 1998) for \$4.2 million in stock!

This deal is part of a frenzy of mergers and acquisitions taking place in the Internet market.

This move is in direct competition with Microsoft, providing serious back-up for its most serious competitor in the browser market. Also, for AOL which is fast turning into a top electronic media company, the acquisition of Netscape means more consolidations of its position.

## INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

## Change your life, with voice dictation

THIS WEEK, three colleagues of mine called me with the same question. They all inquired about the Arabic Voice Dictation Systems that they had read about on this page!

What really interested me was that each one had a different reason to ask about the system.

My first colleague suffers from back pains and nerve strain in his arms. He has been ordered by doctors not to use his arms in strenuous activities like writing or typing! As a journalist, he is going nuts. Every time he has to hand in an article, he goes through all sorts of pain and discomfort to write it! For him, voice dictation in Arabic could be the answer to his prayers.

I explained to him that, as of yet, the voice recognition technologies available are somewhat experimental; but that a new product from IBM looks very promising. I myself haven't tested it, but everyone was raving about it at the Gulf Information Technology Exhibition (GITEX), held in Dubai last month! The product is called Via Voice Gold. It costs JD 110 and works well.

Moving onto my second colleague who is a "seasoned" writer. He is a senior editor at a local newspaper and seems to be interested in publishing a book, which he will enjoy "dictating" to his computer. For a creative writer, this is a dream come true. Imagine talking aloud, to your notebook computer equipped with voice recognition, as you sit in the beautiful sun, in a green meadow. Now, that's an inspiring setting to write a book. Until recently, you could only be creative in such surroundings if you had a pen and paper!

By being able to dictate to your computer in Arabic, you can even keep quick notes and reminders of every single thing that occurs to you during your work day. Or, in the evening, you can create a daily diary of the events of your life. Who knows, maybe you'll publish it as a biography one day! As for my third colleague, he told me about a dear old relative of his who couldn't write, simply because he didn't enjoy the benefits of a basic education some forty years ago. However, this person is a well-spoken narrator, who would like to put his words, somehow, in writing.

For a person like that, an Arabic voice dictation system is a wonderful thing. Of course, it will require some simple knowledge of computing to operate it, but that can be managed by a friend or assistant. The applications of voice dictation in battling the effects of illiteracy are amazing.

What most people don't know is that you can command your computer to perform any function by voice. For example, you could shout "open" at your computer, and it will start your favourite program. You could even say "shutdown" for Windows to close! In a way, you could end up talking to your computer for the most of the day. Now that should suit most tech-heads who already interact with their computer more than they do with their wife!

Generally, being able to "communicate" with your PC is a very attractive idea for people from all walks of life. There should be many more people out there, other than my three colleagues, who have equally convincing reasons to be excited about Arabic voice dictation systems. Voice dictation technologies can really change lives. This is what computing is really all about; making your world easier to live in and helping you unleash your creative potential.

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# A cut above the rest



Lubna Khader  
Star Staff Writer

**ZARQA**—The 'Versace' hair style is a cut above the rest. Named after the well-known Italian designer, the Versace style quickly caught on, especially among the youth of the world. In Jordan, it's common today to see young men and women with the famous Versace cuts—the long and short hair styles characterized by its flexibility to fit different faces.

The Versace cut is perfect for square and thin faces, but not suitable for long or straight faces. The short style has an added advantage of bringing out the features of the face.

There are other hair styles as well. One of the most popular is the 'Caret', a French cut that has been eschewed from days gone by, and looks especially stylish on round faces.

Today, many things can be done to make the hair look more 'bouncy'. For women who like a change of look, a tint is always available. It can provide an instant, new look to your hair.

"The color of the tint should match with the color of the skin," says Suleiman Sayyed, a beauty expert and a well-known makeup expert in Zarqa. "Red and brown are the most desirable colors, as women on the whole have light brown skin," Sayyed adds.

There is a step by step procedure for applying the tint. "First I cover all the hair with the tint, then I choose a lock of hair and color it with the derivatives of the tint's color," Sayyed explains.

Hair reflects the beauty of a woman, and it must be protected from damaging elements, especially the severe change in tem-

peratures during winter and summer. "In winter, the hair is exposed to many factors, such as the cold and rain, which can cause it to fray. In summer, too much sunshine can badly affect the health of the hair as well," Sayyed points out. "Your hair needs to be managed and taken care of everyday," the stylist adds.

He emphasized that hair-dryers, hair spray and gel can ruin hair in the long term. However, there is a way of protecting your hair and maintaining its vibrancy. "To maintain strong, shiny hair, women should shower with an oil-based shampoo twice a week, and use natural herb-extracted creams on a daily basis."

There are three kinds of hair: dry, normal and greasy. Each type needs special care and attention. Greasy hair doesn't need an oil-based shampoo, but dry hair does.

"Dry hair is more prone to damage, and can easily break, so it vital that extra attention is given. Those with normal hair should still use oil-based shampoos for extra protection," Sayyed continues.

Beauty experts warn ladies not to tint their hair at home, because it is possible that too much oxygen could be applied, which can burn the roots. "By doing so, this process could also damage the length of the hair and the scalp," Sayyed continued.

"It's a fact that the hair grows to about two and a half to three and a half centimeters in summer, but in winter this is reduced to only one and a half centimeters. Putting too much tint in your hair could lead to an extra decrease hair growth. Your hair is a part of your body, and it needs intensive care and constant protection," Sayyed concludes.



Sayyed



## SCRAPBOOK

The video clip:  
Pleasure and purpose

By Rasheed Al Roussan  
Special to The Star

THE LAST 10 years have witnessed a rapid and influential development in arts and media, especially after the invasion of the satellite saucers. The local stations have lost their monopoly to orbit channels.

Cassettes, floppy disks and videos are becoming history now, with the invention of the compact disk-CD. Moreover, the marriage between arts and the media has given birth to other inventions: the offspring of video clips.

This revolutionary technique has created a new identity for singers all over the world. It even paved the way for a new wave of music: fast, rhythmic and colorful. The moment a song appears on screen, you become mesmerized by the momentary shots and scenes of people dancing and singing. You suddenly fall into the beats of the song, your eyes dance while watching.

The video clip is a series of rapid scenes, which usually follows a rhythmic pattern related to the song itself. They depend on visual and auditory effects, which gives the song its new dimension.

However, there is a thin line between a theme of a song and how it is represented on screen. Ironically, the most common ingredient for a video clip today is eroticism: young attractive women jumping here and there, dancing, and moving their seductive bodies. It is not a problem as long as the viewers are satisfied!

Although many video clips are beautifully directed and 'interwoven', there are many horrors. For instance, director Fares Al-Aryan is well-known for his famous visual manifestations of Amr Diab's songs: 'Noor Al-Ain', 'Kag'een', and 'Awedony'.

Unfortunately, women are one of Aryan's priorities as a director. In 'Awedony', the director succeeded in directing a beautiful portrait of Al Oksor, with its ancient architectural beauties. For a moment, you think that Amr Diab is singing for the glory and magic of Al Oksor. The director may have intended this, but the theme of the song does with the eroticism of the video clip.

"Samira's voice is a thing of beauty," says the subtitle atmosphere of candles and angelic figures of women all over the place, listening to the gypsy hymns of Samira's voice, is a thrilling thing to watch.

Salah Al-Sharabi himself admitted that the song is a "vulgar" way of artistic expression: the music, Samira's voice and of course the video clip, served the composer's purpose well enough!

At the same time, artists like Majda Al Roomi preserved the quality of their video clips.

Majda's videos are highly sensual: they mirror Majda's charisma as well as her musical themes.

Western pop music shares the same formula: sexy looks and violent acts. The problem is that instead of elevating the song through the art of the video clip, it is being degraded and misunderstood most of the time. A song may carry a valuable theme, but when it is fused with the visual magnitude of the video clip it turns into something else.

The boundaries of entertainment are violating the moral codes of art as a didactic means of communication. There is nothing wrong with enjoying yourself while watching a song on TV, as long it appeals to you.

The issue of appreciation is associated with what people like rather than what people need. Pleasure comes first, whether it is wrong or right. Most directors aren't really concerned.

Furthermore, women are the most victimized element in video clips. It is a degrading thing to portray women as sex objects, orbiting around the realm of a singer in a video clip, dressed in mini skirts and with seductive makeup.

I am afraid that in the future there won't even be any mini skirts! Actually, this is happening in the west. Recently, the famous singer Alanis Morissette appeared on the MTV completely naked, singing one of her songs.



# The making of Matisse

The Unknown Matisse: A Life of Henri Matisse, VOL. 1 1869-1908, by Hilary Spurling, Hamish Hamilton £25, 480 pages

Reviewed by Jackie Wulfschlaeger

Matisse said that art should be as soothing as a good armchair, a metaphor, says Hilary Spurling, "that has done him more harm ever since than any other image he might have chosen." It combined with the story of his regular private life, happy marriage and familial loyalty, to nail his reputation as a grave bourgeois, at once stuffy and lightweight, for generations of art lovers.

In a century of unprecedented turbulence and disruption, we have looked to painters to embody emotional havoc, on and off the canvas; and it is those artists whose lives were most messy and shocking who have become the subjects of magisterial, full, gossipy biographies in recent times: John Richardson's Picasso, Michael Holroyd's Augustus John, Matisse by contrast has remained unknown.

But you only need to look at his paintings to feel that there is more to his story. Behind those passionate, luminous, sun-drenched works is a desperation for peace and harmony; the rich, decorative images have been achieved at the cost of enormous inner anguish, and it is the emotional depths as well as the purity and tranquillity to which we respond.

"Suppose I want to paint a woman's body," Matisse explained. "I imbue it with grace and charm, but I know that I must give it something more. I will concentrate the meaning of this body by seeking its essential lines. The charm will be less obvious at first glance, but it must eventually emerge from the new image I have obtained, which will have a broader meaning, and one more fully human."

With Picasso, Matisse is one of the two founding figures of modern art: they stand at opposite ends of the spectrum, but each has shaped the visual imagination of our century by the way he met its horrors. "Matisse's intimate acquaintance with violence and destruction, a sense of human misery sharpened by years of humiliation, rejection and exposure could be neutralized only by the serene power and stable weight of art," says Spurling.

Her book is an illumination, not only in its unraveling of the obscure life of a great artist, but as an example of the coming of age of a new sort of biography in which it is not a scandalous private life but an endlessly evolving inner consciousness—the lonely conversation we all conduct with ourselves about finding our own path and its meaning—that is the true subject. This seems to me the exciting development of late 1990s biography: a move away from the overblown titillations which characterized the genre in the 1970s and 1980s, when biographers were experimenting with the limits of frankness in what could be exposed (Brenda Maddox's detailed recreation of James Joyce's sex life in Nora, for instance, or Holroyd's map of Augustus John's cruel, erotic network), to books such as this one and Richard Holmes's Coleridge: finely-tuned psychological dramas of a self-doubting imagination at work over a lifetime.

Matisse's was nurtured in the sober landscape of French Flanders, where he was born in 1869 at textile trade. From his parents he inherited the ideal of stable family and the ineluctable northern work ethic. His father was a seed merchant who worked all day and night; his mother provided unconditional encouragement to any endeavour her sons took up. Her hobby was porcelain painting; from her and from the weaving neighbors who surrounded him, loading and plying coloured bobbins, hunched over their looms, clacking shuttles from dawn to dusk, he took the sense of colour that was the essence of his art.

Long after he had broken away from the north, he remained, says Spurling, not only devoted to Flemish beer and chips, but "a true son of the weavers of Bohain, whose fabrics astonished contemporaries by their glowing colours, their sensuous refinement, their phenomenal lightness and lustre." In that sternly utili-



tarian society, "there was little other nourishment for a nascent visual imagination": all around was the grim landscape of beet fields, smoking sugar refineries and textile mills, which was flattened by invading German armies three times in Matisse's lifetime.

In the broadest sense, this is a Freudian biography: the child is father of the man in every aspect that mattered. Young Matisse was dutiful but dozy, uninterested in the family business, able to express his sensitivity only through a series of nervous illnesses. At 20, recuperating from one of them in hospital, he had his legendary artistic awakening when the pragmatist in the next bed told how helpful it was to copy Swiss landscapes after a hard day at work ("And then, you see, you end up with something to hang on the wall.")

Matisse never looked back. From

art college in St Quentin, where he was shung out for painting in colour and outdoors, he moved to Paris. To his father, it seemed a betrayal of every belief: in fact, Matisse simply transferred the Bohain values of perseverance, self-belief, loyalty, to his new bohemian life in buzzing, gay 1890s Paris. His breakthrough came in 1895 in Belle-Ile in southern Brittany. It was the first time he had travelled beyond the inland plains of Flanders, and on this wild coast he exchanged his 'Flemish palette' of earthy browns and clay greens for the rainbow colours of the Impressionists.

It was a rehearsal for a more dramatic awakening to the bright abundance and ease of southern Europe when, in 1898, he spent his honeymoon in Ajaccio and returned to stay with his wife's southern family in Toulouse. The clash of north and south made him. He is grounded in the northern sensibility, says Spurling: "the austere, concentrated feeling he shared with the great Flemish masters: a spiritual intensity released again and again at crucial points in his development as a painter by the light and colour of the south."

His wife, Amélie Parayre, is the heroine here, bold, indomitable, she had a fount of youthful courage and idealism awaiting a mission, which she found in her husband's radical art. She was muse, model, mainstay. She opened a hat shop to make ends meet while no one would buy a Matisse. She pawned her favourite jewel, never retrieved, for Matisse to buy Cézanne's 'Three Bathers' at a time when the family was almost starving. She brought up her children with the example of unstinting work and absolute emotional integrity that had formed Matisse himself. She posed in espadrilles and kimono by the Mediterranean for pictures work of a lunatic. When collectors began to make derisory offers, she held out for and got the full asking price.

For 20 years, visitors found their way to Matisse's paintings at the Salon by following the sounds of jeers and catcalls. The combination of realistic details of Amélie in St Tropez, with imaginary beings in the famous 'luxu, calme et volupté', for example, strange, uneasy, vibrant, bulging with energy, full of flagrant irregularities, simply made no sense to traditional viewers in 1904. "When a boy scrawls shit on a wall, he may be expressing the state of his soul," said the older painter Paul Sérusier, "but it's not a work of art." Plus ça change.

Spurling is not an art historian, but she is good on the slow evolution of public taste and superb on the effect of public ridicule on Matisse's fragile ego. Inner trepidation, lifelong insomnia, and nervous tension were the prices he paid for aesthetic boldness. Then in 1902, he abandoned his reckless experimental leaps in mid-flight, and returned for two years to grey tones and conventional subjects.

Scholars call this the "dark period" and put it down to native prudence; Spurling uncovers a tragedy that hit Amélie's family, whose fortunes were tied to a dishonest speculator-employer who crashed sensationally in 1902, causing thousands of investors to lose their life-savings.

It was a scandal comparable to the Dreyfus affair; Amélie's father was briefly imprisoned, and Matisse gave up everything to help his family. It is a touching, human interlude, not so significant in the long term for Matisse's art, but revealing of the emotional tightrope he walked between stability and uncertainty.

He emerged into the daylight of St Tropez in 1904 and Collioure in 1905 as a famous 'Fauve' or 'wild beast', to produce some of his greatest works 'The Open Window, Collioure'; 'Woman in a Hat', 'Le Bonheur de Vivre'.

Spurling leaves him as he has found two collectors, Sarah Stein, sister-in-law of Leo and Gertrude, and the fabulously wealthy Russian Sergei Shchukin, whose faith in him help tilt the tightrope the right way. It is a mesmerizing portrait, at once satisfying and demoralizing as we await Volume 2, of the making of an artist.

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